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Special Report of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2281 (2016), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 31 July 2016 and requested me to conduct a strategic review of the Mission to ensure, in consultation with the Government of the Central African Republic, that the future mandate of MINUSCA was properly configured and adapted to a post-transition stabilization environment that would enable peacebuilding efforts. In its resolution, the Council requested me to present my recommendations by 22 June. The present report comprises the findings of the strategic review and recommendations concerning the future mandate of MINUSCA.

II. Background

2. The most recent episode of the long-running crisis in the Central African Republic erupted in December 2012 when a rebel coalition, the Séléka, advanced towards Bangui, taking over the capital and ousting the then President, François Bozizé, in March 2013. The ensuing violence pitted the Séléka against self-defence groups that formed the anti-balaka, prompting large-scale intercommunal violence with religious undertones and a massive protection crisis, including the displacement of a fifth of the population internally and to neighbouring countries. The country faced a total breakdown of law and order, and already fragile State institutions completely collapsed. In April 2014, the Security Council adopted resolution 2149 (2014), in which it requested me to subsume the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic into MINUSCA. The establishment of MINUSCA followed missions deployed by organizations of the subregion and the African Union and, combined with the actions of other international forces, in particular French Sangaris force, contributed to a relative improvement in the security situation.

3. In July 2014, the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, initiated a political process in Brazzaville in his capacity as mediator of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Nationwide local consultations

early in 2015 were followed by the holding of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in May 2015. Credible and largely peaceful presidential and legislative elections were held in late 2015 and early in 2016. On 30 March, Faustin Archange Touadera was sworn in as President, bringing the two-year political transition to an end.

III. Strategic review of the Mission

4. Following the completion of a conflict-analysis exercise, a strategic review mission to the Central African Republic was conducted from 7 to 17 May 2016. The team met a broad range of stakeholders, including the President, the Prime Minister, Simplice Sarandji, and Cabinet members, the Bureau of the National Assembly, key members of the parliament and former presidential candidates, civil society and women's groups, representatives of the diplomatic and donor community, including the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic, MINUSCA senior leadership and civilian and uniformed personnel, and the United Nations and humanitarian country teams. In addition to Bangui, the team also visited Bouar and Kaga Bandoro.

A. Main findings of the strategic review

1. Political and subregional situation

5. The political situation continues to be dominated by the aftermath of the events of 2013. Most interlocutors agreed that, with the election of the President, the country had turned a page. Expectations are high that the newly elected officials will deliver on their promises immediately. In addition, the country continues to benefit from, and will continue to need, the goodwill of the international community. Interlocutors confirmed, however, that the challenges remained daunting and that State capacity was extremely low. In his meeting with the review team, the President confirmed that addressing the security situation was his first priority, underlining the need for a comprehensive approach towards the armed groups that involved political dialogue, security sector reform and reconciliation, together with a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process and efforts to combat impunity. He also stressed the importance of concluding the electoral cycle by organizing municipal and regional elections, which interlocutors noted could be an important step towards addressing gaps in representative and accountable governance.

6. Following his inauguration, the President initiated a first round of dialogue with the armed groups, including factions of the ex-Séléka and anti-balaka. On 17 May, he wrote a letter to me to confirm his Government's determination to confront the root causes of the conflict, including through dialogue with the armed groups. In a communiqué issued on 18 May, he reported on his initial discussions with the armed groups, stating that several of them had confirmed their willingness to engage in a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process, although others had preconditions. On the same day, he appointed a former presidential candidate, Jean Willybiro-Sako, as a special minister counsellor and coordinator for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, security sector reform and national reconciliation.

2. Subregional and regional dynamics

7. Interlocutors confirmed that subregional dynamics and bilateral relations between the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries remained vital for the country's future trajectory. The dynamics in the subregion are closely interlinked and affect the situation in the Central African Republic, including in relation to the country's porous borders, the transhumance, weapons proliferation and cross-border armed group and criminal activity. The long-term stability of the country will depend in part on the subregional and regional integration of the Central African Republic and the continued engagement of neighbours in support of the country in a constructive manner.

3. Security situation

8. The continued presence of armed groups and other armed spoilers, as well as intercommunal violence and the lack of capacity of the national security forces, pose the most pressing and dangerous challenge to the stability of the country. The armed groups and other spoilers continue to threaten civilians, divert and illicitly exploit natural resources, undermine security and the rule of law and deny the Government access to and authority over large parts of the country.

9. The ex-Séléka coalition has splintered and reorganized since being officially dissolved in September 2013. The Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique is under the control of Nourredine Adam, who serves as the first vice-president of the group, which continues to be led, at least in name, by the former President, Michel Djotodia. The group renounced the signature of its representative to the agreement on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation negotiated during the Bangui Forum and signed on 10 May 2015. The group's area of influence stretches from Haute-Kotto and Vakaga prefectures and westward to Nana-Grébizi prefecture.

10. Other ex-Séléka factions with the capacity for destabilization include the Bambari-based Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, led by Ali Darassa, which claims, among other things, to protect the Fulani population, notably in Basse-Kotto and Ouaka prefectures. The smaller Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique, formed in July 2015 by Idriss Ahamat and Mahamat al-Khatim, is active primarily in Kémo-Gribingui and Ouham prefectures, but has challenged the hegemony of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique elsewhere. Another ex-Séléka group, the Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique, led by Joseph Zoundeiko, is active in Bambari. Other groups loosely linked to the ex-Séléka include the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain, led by Abdoulaye Miskine, and the Retour, réclamation, réhabilitation group, which claims to defend the Fulani community. Each of these groups controls significant economic activities in its area of operation, including illicit gold and diamond mining.

11. Interlocutors reported an increase in violent activities in Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures attributed frequently to the Lord's Resistance Army, with more than 290 abductions reported between January and April, including of 60 children. A number of self-defence groups have emerged in those areas in response to reported attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army, with sometimes similar tactics. On 20 May, Uganda announced its intention to withdraw its troops from the African Union Regional Task Force in the Central African Republic.

12. The anti-balaka movement and affiliated groups remain present throughout the western and central parts of the country. Many have localized criminal agendas relating to access to mining activities, river or road axes and/or cattle herds, although some maintain links to Bangui-based anti-balaka leaders. Clashes between anti-balaka groups and ex-Séléka factions continue mostly in the Bambari and Kaga Bandoro areas.

13. Against this backdrop, the strategic review team noted the continuing efforts to deploy additional capabilities to strengthen MINUSCA, including the planned deployment of a quick-reaction force. The review was also informed of the planned withdrawal of French Sangaris forces from the Central African Republic by the end of 2016.

4. Protection of civilians, human rights and humanitarian situation

Protection of civilians

14. Although the situation has improved since 2013, civilians continue to be at serious risk, mainly in the centre of the country, in particular in Bambari and Ndélé, and in the Bossangoa-Batangafo-Kaga-Bandoro triangle. Protection concerns are also high in the north-west, in particular in the areas of Bocaranga and Paoua owing to the presence of anti-balaka and other local armed groups. While freedom of movement has improved, the continued presence of minority enclaves (see para. 14) in the west and Bangui indicates continued threats to civilians, which has an impact on potential population returns. In the east, where the main ex-Séléka factions and other armed groups compete over the control of territory, there are protection concerns relating to wildlife trafficking and the illicit trade of natural resources, while in Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures there is an increasing number of abductions and other protection concerns linked to the reported presence of the Lord's Resistance Army and self-defence groups.

Human rights, including conflict-related sexual violence and grave violations against children

15. There was a notable decrease in large-scale violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses by armed groups during the presidential and legislative electoral period. Human rights abuses and violations by armed groups continue, however, especially in Bambari, Kaga Bandoro and Ndélé, as well as in the north-west and parts of the east. Ex-Séléka factions and anti-balaka groups continue to perpetrate killings, injuries, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, extortion, pillaging and the destruction or appropriation of property. Increasing human rights violations by government security forces, in particular by elements of the armed forces, gendarmerie, police and the Central African Office for the Suppression of Banditry, have been documented, including extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests and detentions. Complete impunity for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence and grave violations against children, continues to be reported. A draft law establishing a national institution for human rights is pending consideration by the Government. Conflict-related sexual violence is a major concern, which remains largely underreported. Armed groups have yet to make a formal commitment to addressing this situation. The active recruitment and use of children by armed groups has subsided in large part, although commitments made at the Bangui Forum to separate children from the armed groups have not

been implemented. Children also continue to be victim of abuses and grave violations by armed groups. Serious abuses against persons accused of witchcraft, mostly older persons, women and children, have increased since 2013.

Humanitarian situation

16. Half the population continues to face acute humanitarian needs. Some one fifth of the population remain displaced, with more than 418,000 people displaced internally, including more than 185,000 living in some 100 sites where they are exposed to security threats, including infiltration by armed groups. More than 36,000 people from minority groups are still at risk in enclaves in Berbérati, Boda, Bouar, Carnot, Dekoa, PK5/Bangui and Yaloke, with no sustainable solution for their protection. Some 482,500 Central African refugees remain in neighbouring countries.

17. Attacks and hostilities between armed groups, in particular in the Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto, Haut-Mbomou, Ouham and Ouham-Pendé prefectures, continue to cause new displacements. Humanitarian access to people in need remains constrained by logistical and security challenges. In the east, humanitarian access has been restricted following a surge of attacks. Notwithstanding some returns by internally displaced persons, the conditions for voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable returns have yet to be met. The Central African Republic hosts 7,664 refugees and asylum seekers mainly from Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. In addition, some 10,500 South Sudanese refugees arrived recently in Bambouti. Although humanitarian assistance remains the lifeline of half the population, the 2016 humanitarian response plan, requiring $531.5 million, was less than 12 per cent funded as at 14 June 2016.

5. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and security sector reform

Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation

18. The President indicated that disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation was one of his first priorities and that he had initiated dialogue with armed groups in that regard. Some armed groups have made the settling of their grievances, including participation in government processes and institutions, integration into the internal security services and defence forces and the socioeconomic development of the north-east, preconditions for enrolling in the process. Pending the beginning of a national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, MINUSCA is implementing predisarmament, demobilization and reintegration projects on the basis of article 4 of the agreement on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, on the principles of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and integration into uniformed forces, signed at the Bangui Forum. More than 2,800 combatants, including 413 women, have enrolled in such labour-intensive projects in six priority locations. Projects to reduce community violence targeting members of armed groups who do not meet the eligibility criteria for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation have been launched in Bangui and Paoua.

Security sector reform: state of the Central African Armed Forces

19. The President has publicly expressed his intention to transform the Central African Armed Forces from a "projection force" to a "garrison force" that is professional and inclusive, with clear command and control structures. The military continues to be dominated by three primarily Christian ethnic groups and the defence sector is excessively staffed, with 8,300 persons on its payroll, accounting for a quarter of public expenditure. During the transition, 7,300 soldiers were registered in a biometric database and more than 3,000 army personnel underwent a simplified verification process. The Ministry of Defence and the defence headquarters were partially restructured with support of the European Union Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic.

20. Notwithstanding the development of a draft national security policy by the transitional authorities, the roles and responsibilities of the armed forces and internal security institutions have yet to be delineated. The situation was further compounded by the recent deployment of the armed forces for law enforcement duties in Bangui. Overall, policy frameworks are non-existent or anachronistic, while democratic civilian oversight of security agencies is weak. The absence of a dedicated civilian oversight authority to regulate weapons and ammunition management and activities has also contributed to the illicit flow of weapons.

6. Extension of State authority and the rule of law

21. Since 2013, 14 prefects, 71 sub-prefects and 176 mayors nominated by the transitional authorities have been redeployed and received basic training, with the support of partners. A total of 400 civil servants, mostly from the education sector, were also redeployed before the elections and, since September 2014, MINUSCA has funded the rehabilitation of 80 administrative buildings through quick-impact projects. Interlocutors noted that most of the redeployed civil servants required specialized training, while accountability mechanisms were largely absent. Many civil servants assigned to the provinces ultimately return to Bangui, while continuing to collect salaries. The State continues to play a marginal role in the delivery of social services, especially in the health sector.

Police

22. The President and other interlocutors, including partners, acknowledged the importance of reinforcing the police and gendarmerie, which are understaffed and underfunded. Of the 3,700 registered police and gendarmerie officers, only 800 are deployed outside Bangui. The police-citizen ratio of 1:1,250 is extremely low. There is a high rate of ageing officers with no institutionalized pension system and salary arrears are common. There has been no recruitment since 2010 and no retirements since 2005. A draft five-year development and capacity-building plan has been developed with the support of MINUSCA.

Justice

23. The country's 28 ordinary courts and 162 magistrates effectively ceased to function following the events of 2013. Magistrates have since been redeployed to 23 courts in Bangui and throughout the country with the support of MINUSCA. Courts in Bangui have resumed operations, including holding the first criminal

sessions since 2010. Magistrates appointed in parts of the country under the influence of armed groups remain in Bangui.

24. The investigation and prosecution of serious crimes by the national authorities remains difficult. It is estimated that 70 per cent of criminal cases are heard by magistrates without adequate professional training, owing in part to the National School of Administration and Judicial Studies lacking training curricula and skilled trainers. The Supreme Court of Justice and the Inspectorate-General of Judicial Services lack the necessary resources, while relevant legislation does not guarantee the independence of the judiciary. Threats to magistrates and their families have been reported, and there is no system to protect victims and witnesses. The operationalization of the Special Criminal Court remains urgent in view of the inability of the national justice system to try serious crimes. MINUSCA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are supporting the selection and deployment of and support for international and national magistrates to the Court.

Corrections

25. The penitentiary service was underdeveloped before 2013 and is barely functional. Although directors have been appointed for all 38 prisons, only 7 facilities house inmates and only 11 have staff present. Prison escapes are common, infrastructure is largely dilapidated and the food budget is woefully inadequate. Notwithstanding existing legislation providing for the civilian management of the prisons, there are fewer than 60 civilian prison staff, only 8 of whom are trained in prison security. The armed forces currently fill the gap, including in Bangui.

7. Socioeconomic recovery

26. In 2012, the Central African Republic was ranked 180 of 187 on the human development index. In 2013, the gross domestic product declined by 37 per cent following the crisis and, for the following two years, the Government's budget was funded almost entirely by donors. National revenue began to increase in 2015, however, and reached approximately $100 million, having plummeted to $24 million in 2013. The increase was bolstered by a modest recovery in key sectors early in 2015 and supported by the implementation of public financial management reforms, including through the central accounting agency of the Treasury. Notwithstanding that development, expenditure exceeded foreseen revenue in 2015, while only 30 per cent of government expenditure followed regular procedures. A gap of $17 million is projected for the second quarter of 2016.

27. National authorities recognized a need to lay the groundwork for bridging humanitarian, recovery and development efforts through the formulation of a prioritized socioeconomic recovery plan. To support preparations for a conference of donors and investors to be held in Brussels in November 2016, a joint United Nations, World Bank and European Union scoping mission conducted from 10 to 17 May agreed with the Government on the objectives and scope of and the approach for a joint peacebuilding and recovery assessment, which will be led by the Government with the assistance of partners and have the objective of prioritizing needs across the development, policy and security pillars. The strategy will be presented in Brussels and will serve as a framework to guide the support and financing by the Government and its partners over a five-year period.

8. Support considerations

28. Managing a United Nations peacekeeping operation in a landlocked country of more than 620,000 km^2 continues to represent a significant challenge, and the Mission is still working to reach its full operational capacity. The major supply route from Doula to Bangui is the lifeline of the country, MINUSCA and humanitarian and development partners and needs to be constantly secured. It is also prone to congestion. As a result, the transportation of cargo on this route can take from 20 to 40 days. In addition, the Government continues to impose taxes on all imported goods for MINUSCA. The infrastructure network is highly dysfunctional, especially in the east. The rainy season renders roads impassable for six months of the year, making the east, north and south-east reachable only by air during this time. Strong winds and high levels of dust, as well as the scarcity of properly refurbished airstrips, make the majority of airports not fully functional after sunset.

29. The 2013 crisis had an impact on local commerce and banking systems, and opportunities for outsourcing are minimal. Service providers, when available from outside the country, come at a prohibitive cost. The providers of information and communications technology are unreliable. Recent commercial transport arrangements, however, are more feasible and customs brokers are now available to facilitate the movement of goods into the country. Challenges with respect to human capital within the country have also hampered the recruitment of national staff.

B. Recommendations of the strategic review

1. End state, priority tasks and strategic objective for the Mission

30. Drawing on lessons learned from earlier peacekeeping deployments in the Central African Republic, the review assessed that the end state for the United Nations peacekeeping presence would be the attainment of the minimum conditions required to avoid a relapse into conflict following the withdrawal of United Nations troops and police. The end state would be achieved through interrelated and overarching objectives linked to the political process and institution-building, security and the protection of civilians, human rights and justice and socioeconomic recovery and development.

31. In pursuing such an end state, MINUSCA will need to continue to make the protection of civilians a key task, within its capabilities and areas of deployment. Other key tasks will include facilitating the creation of a secure environment for the unhindered and civilian-led delivery of humanitarian assistance and the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return and local integration or resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees, in close coordination with humanitarian and development actors. The implementation of the mandate will continue to be underpinned by United Nations system-wide adherence to my Rights Up Front initiative.

32. While reaffirming these ongoing priority tasks, the review sought to define a strategic objective that would most effectively advance MINUSCA towards its proposed end state. It is recommended that the strategic objective of MINUSCA over the coming two to three years be to support the sustainable reduction of the presence of armed groups through a comprehensive approach. By focusing on this strategic objective and prioritizing activities geared to progress towards it,

MINUSCA will contribute to a more secure environment for civilians, the development of an accountable and responsive State capable of delivering basic services, a climate more favourable to the protection of human rights that is increasingly conducive to combating impunity, and reconciliation and social and economic development.

2. Recommended priority activities

33. It is recommended that this strategic objective be pursued by MINUSCA through a comprehensive and flexible three-pronged approach.

Supporting the political process, as well as accountable, inclusive and transparent governance and the sustained extension of responsible State authority

34. MINUSCA would make full use of its good offices and technical expertise to support a continuation of the process initiated by the President with the armed groups, with the aim of broadening the political process to address the root causes of the conflict. Doing so would involve supporting the Government in its engagement with neighbouring countries, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union, in consultation with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

35. MINUSCA would support the Government in broadening political space, including by supporting efforts to address marginalization and local grievances. It would also enable an eventual decentralization process by providing technical, logistical and security support for the holding of local elections, notably with technical assistance, such as for the development of essential legislation. Further to a request from the national electoral authority for such support, the United Nations will undertake an electoral assessment mission to determine the modalities, nature, scope and scale of any such support in line with the principles of self-reliance and sustainability. MINUSCA would also support increasing inclusive governance by promoting the participation of the population in local development decisions, including through engagement with civil society groups and political parties. Particular attention would be given to supporting the engagement of women and young people in political decision-making processes.

36. MINUSCA would promote accountable and transparent governance by supporting, in coordination with partners, the National Assembly in its oversight and legislative functions. The Mission would also promote the reform of key rule of law and security institutions, including by continuing to use its good offices to advocate critical reforms, as well as the creation of strong national human rights institutions. It is recommended that, in coordination with partners, the Mission deploy experts to key ministries to assist in the development of national plans for the professionalization and deployment of, among others, police, judicial, penitentiary and territorial administration officers.

37. MINUSCA would continue to support the extension of State authority to increase its effectiveness and responsiveness to local needs, including promoting the principles of gender sensitivity and equality. Given the breadth and scope of such needs, however, MINUSCA would prioritize the provision of technical advice to select government ministries at the national level, including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior, Public Security and Territorial Administration, as well as to local administrations through its current field presences. It is

recommended that MINUSCA mentor local authorities in priority areas, in close coordination with partners, to foster confidence among local communities in the equitable delivery of State services. It is also recommended that MINUSCA continue to support the deployment of territorial administration and rule of law authorities in priority locations, including by identifying needs and training on the provision of minimal administrative and judicial services in these priority areas.

38. It is recommended that MINUSCA assume a leading role in supporting the Government in the reform and development of the police and gendarmerie, with the support of donors and the United Nations country team, including through the Global Focal Point on Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-conflict and other Crisis Situations. MINUSCA would continue to support the review of the draft police and gendarmerie capacity-building and development plan, as well efforts to build the capacity of existing police and gendarmes to assume their law-and-order responsibilities, including static guard and protection duties in Bangui currently performed by MINUSCA. The Mission would also continue to coordinate international assistance to the police and gendarmerie. In addition, once the police and gendarmerie academy is refurbished through the joint programme of MINUSCA, UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and contingent on the ability of the Government to fund severances and pensions for police and gendarmes eligible for retirement in 2016, MINUSCA would support the selection, recruitment, targeted vetting and training of at least 500 new police and gendarmerie recruits in the coming 12 to 18 months, taking into account the need to promote the recruitment of women, and in full compliance with the human rights due diligence policy. This training would be complemented by reinforced co-location by MINUSCA with national police offices and gendarmes in agreed priority areas, including as part of the deployment of the territorial administration and other rule of law authorities. Efforts are also under way to engage donors and other partners to provide additional support in key areas on police and gendarme reform.

39. MINUSCA would support the consolidation of the governance and accountability structures of the justice sector, in particular the Supreme Court of Justice and the Ministry of Justice, as well as the training of judicial personnel at the national level by the National School of Administration and Judicial Studies. It would also continue to support and mentor national judicial actors progressively deployed in priority areas to enable the delivery of basic justice services, including by ensuring that services are available to women and children, and augment local capacity to process criminal cases, in particular by supporting criminal trials, as well as basic administrative services such as birth certificates. Where the deployment of judicial authorities is not possible, it is recommended that the Mission mentor and support magistrates assigned to those prefectures but currently operating out of Bangui on, among other things, the issuance of warrants and the processing of criminal cases against those arrested under the urgent temporary measures mandate.

40. Pending any progress made on the demilitarization of prison security, MINUSCA would continue to provide the robust mentoring and monitoring of trainee national prison officers and armed forces elements charged with security at the Ngaragba central prison and the Camp de Roux annex at Ngaragba, as well as monitor prison conditions. In cooperation with the United Nations country team and other partners, MINUSCA would support the gender-responsive selection and

training of new prison officers, with a particular focus on the 250 officers who will gradually, over three years, replace armed forces elements currently securing Ngaragba and Camp de Roux, and the rehabilitation of eight prison facilities in priority locations, taking into account the need to separate male and female and adult and juvenile detainees. MINUSCA would also mentor and monitor national prison authorities outside Bangui.

Enhancing the security environment, including by supporting the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, community violence reduction projects and security sector reform

41. It is recommended that MINUSCA support the creation of a secure environment conducive to the sustainable reduction of the threat posed by armed groups, including through political dialogue, a national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, security sector reform and reconciliation. MINUSCA would maintain a robust and flexible posture, with the aim of preventing major armed confrontations and challenges to the State and by securing key areas and main supply routes to ensure freedom of movement and the extension of State authority. Working with partners, it is recommended that MINUSCA also support the Government in addressing illegal taxation and the illicit exploitation of natural resources relating to the presence of the armed groups through targeted approaches. MINUSCA will need to continue to enhance coordination with the African Union Regional Task Force, in particular in the light of the reported increase in attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army. MINUSCA will keep its presence in the east of the country under review in view of the potential departure of Uganda from the Task Force given protection concerns that may materialize.

42. MINUSCA would enable the voluntary disarmament of ex-combatants through a comprehensive gender-sensitive and gender-responsive strategy that supports the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme and community violence reduction projects in affected communities. It would also support the limited integration of members of armed groups into the national security agencies, as well as temporary security arrangements involving members of armed groups. Pending the launch of the national programme, MINUSCA would continue predisarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations and support the Government's planning and fundraising efforts, in particular for the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life and their integration into security and defence forces and other public institutions. Once the conditions for the launch of the national programme are met, MINUSCA would support its implementation, including the launch of operations, the transition of predisarmament, demobilization and reintegration project sites into sites for the national programme and the establishment of a mechanism to identify and repatriate foreign combatants. MINUSCA would also ensure that weapons and ammunition collected through this process are assessed, stored (or destroyed when applicable) and managed appropriately. It is recommended that MINUSCA also continue to support the Government in implementing projects to reduce community violence, as well as community weapons collection and reconciliation efforts, within existing resources. Meanwhile, MINUSCA, in close coordination with the United Nations country team, would continue to implement the young people at risk initiative launched in 2014, while reinforcing efforts to separate children from armed groups.

43. With regard to the reform of the security sector, MINUSCA would provide strategic, political and technical advice to the Government to develop a vision and subsequently design and implement a strategy for the security sector architecture, including to enhance national capacity to address the proliferation of weapons and ensure effective weapons and ammunition management, in coordination with other partners engaged in security sector reform. This would involve ensuring a clear delineation of responsibilities among the national defence and security forces and other uniformed entities. MINUSCA would also support the Government in the coordination of international assistance on security sector reform, including with regard to the elaboration of development plans for the armed forces, police, gendarmerie, defence, water and forest service and border management service.

44. In a letter of 30 May addressed to me by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, I was informed that a European Union training mission, the successor to the European Union Military Advisory Mission, would be established in July. It will train two to three battalions of the armed forces during its initial two-year mandate and play a critical role in defence sector reform, including by providing strategic advice to the Ministry of Defence and to General Staff. To ensure a clear division of labour on the basis of comparative advantages, MINUSCA would ensure coherence between training mission support activities in defence sector reform and the overall security sector reform process by supporting the Government in providing strategic direction to and the coordination of international partners, including the training mission. In addition, it is recommended that the gradual return of armed forces units trained by the training mission to operational missions be done in close cooperation with MINUSCA and in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy. At the same time, it is important to note that, notwithstanding the planned efforts on defence sector reform, a number of gaps will need to be addressed, including the importance of equipping and ensuring the sustenance of trained armed forces units. In the meantime, partners will need to address the issue of the deployment of armed forces elements currently present in Bangui.

45. It is also recommended that MINUSCA support the Government in developing and implementing a progressive, realistic and tailored approach to the targeted vetting of the defence and security forces, including in the context of any integration of armed group elements into security sector institutions. Until then, it is recommended that MINUSCA continue to support the Government in implementing the simple verification process that is being undertaken for the armed forces, which includes targeted human rights vetting, and that this be extended to the police and gendarmerie.

Assisting the Government in combating impunity and promoting and protecting human rights, as well as promoting reconciliation

46. MINUSCA would continue to contribute to efforts to combat impunity by supporting judicial and non-judicial mechanisms in compliance with relevant international norms and standards. It would also promote accountability mechanisms and a culture of responsibility through greater transparency and the promotion and protection of human rights.

47. MINUSCA would support, together with UNDP and with assistance from bilateral donors, the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court, including with regard to its staffing, management and security. The Mission would also assist the national authorities, including the special prosecutor of the Court, in conducting investigations and implementing a well-prioritized prosecutorial strategy aimed at bringing important cases to trial within 18 months of the prosecutor's deployment. The investigations would, among other things, inform the Government's issuance of arrest warrants, which would also inform the implementation of the urgent temporary measures mandate to execute arrests by MINUSCA. The Mission and its partners in the joint rule of law programme would also support the development and implementation of victim and witness-protection mechanisms.

48. It is recommended that MINUSCA support a mapping of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law since 2003, which would inform the development of the prosecution strategy referenced above, national criminal proceedings and potential future mechanisms to establish the truth, reparations and guarantees of non-repetition. MINUSCA would also continue to monitor, investigate and report on the human rights situation in order to inform dialogue and advocacy with national authorities and armed groups with the aim of decreasing violations, including conflict-related sexual violence and grave violations against children, and supporting efforts to combat impunity.

49. Working with partners, MINUSCA would support reconciliation initiatives, including through consultations with local authorities, refugees and internally displaced persons, religious and traditional leaders, women's groups, groups representing young people, representatives of minority ethnic groups and communities on their grievances; mediation and conflict-resolution mechanisms at the national and local levels; and government-led national consultations with communities to promote greater accountability and social cohesion, including with regard to the reintegration of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. As an essential component of reconciliation, MINUSCA would advocate and support a coherent and comprehensive approach to the design of appropriate transitional justice processes and mechanisms to address the legacy of past human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, and those committed against women and children.

3. Partnerships and the role of the wider international community

50. The work of MINUSCA will be based on the principles of complementarity and comparative advantages with the United Nations country team and international actors and in partnership with national authorities. An integrated strategic framework will be developed to deepen collaboration and clarify roles and responsibilities among the United Nations system.

51. The Central African subregion and region, including ECCAS and the African Union, have a crucial role to play in support of the country, in particular in addressing common challenges, including security issues of mutual concern, the management of the transhumance and the provision of targeted financial or in-kind support. MINUSCA, in coordination with UNOCA, will support the efforts of the national authorities to sustain the engagement of the subregion and the region.

52. MINUSCA would prioritize supporting the Government to sustain international attention on the country during the next phase, including for the

generation of sufficient resources for humanitarian requirements and, in particular, at the conference of donors and investors that will be held in Brussels in November 2016. In this regard, MINUSCA would seek to encourage international partners, including the European Union and the World Bank, as well as bilateral and other donors, to address issues beyond its own capacities and to work with them and the national authorities to ensure that the international architecture is responsive to the post-electoral realities.

53. Critical to the successful delivery of international support is the building of a strong partnership with the Government, which would be further strengthened through the proposed framework of mutual accountability. An interministerial committee has been established by the Government to develop, with international partners, such a framework that is based on existing national, regional and international commitments and frameworks, including the outcomes of the Bangui Forum. It will be essential to ensure an effective articulation of this framework with the ongoing peacebuilding and recovery assessment that will inform the planned conference of donors.

54. The implementation of the strategy of MINUSCA will rely on the use of strategic communications as an essential tool to underpin its work. MINUSCA would, among other things, communicate clearly and regularly to key target audiences on its mandate, in particular outside Bangui, with an emphasis on managing expectations and publicizing its work in support of the disarmament of the armed groups, political engagement and dialogue, with a focus on reconciliation.

4. Military, police and support implications

55. Given the continued fragility of the security situation, and taking into account the announced departure of the French Sangaris force, it is recommended that the currently authorized military and police strength of MINUSCA be maintained. The strength of authorized uniformed personnel would be kept under close review depending on changes in the situation on the ground. A rebalancing of the strength of both components, including a possible reduction of the military component, may be considered while progress in the implementation of the Mission's strategy is realized.

56. The capabilities of the military component of MINUSCA are being enhanced through the deployment of additional multipliers within the authorized troop strength, including a special forces company, a multifunctional quick-reaction force and increased situational awareness through an unmanned aerial system. Efforts will continue to enhance the capabilities of existing MINUSCA contingents. In addition, the military deployment will be adjusted and consolidated, including by concentrating the force in larger permanent operating bases to, among other things, allow for longer-range patrols. The new capabilities, coupled with the change in deployment patterns, will enable the force to better project military effect in protecting civilians, creating an enabling environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and addressing the threat of armed groups, while rationalizing the Mission's resources. The change in posture will require greater force mobility. A review of the air mobility requirements will be conducted, taking into account military and logistical requirements. Infrastructure development efforts by MINUSCA will also be enhanced by replacing two of the three signals units with a fourth military engineering unit.

57. MINUSCA will redeploy three of the formed police units currently in Bangui to Bambari, Bria and Kaga Bandoro to enhance the protection of civilians. This will be achieved by working with the Government to gradually transfer static guard duties in Bangui to national security institutions. A further review of the deployment of the formed police units and individual police officers may be required, should additional tasks arise with regard to prison security, the establishment of the Special Criminal Court, the implementation of the development plan of the police and gendarmerie and the securing of sites for internally displaced persons and areas of eventual voluntary returns.

58. In the light of the significant structural challenges inherent in conducting operations in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA will explore additional innovative approaches to support the implementation of its mandate. New technology will be exploited to its fullest. MINUSCA will create a common operating picture by integrating various sensors, including cameras, unmanned aircraft systems and aerostat, static and mobile sensors, into a single framework. The Mission will also explore the use of reusable kits and light transportable and compactable equipment to enable rapid deployments. Partnerships will be sought to increase synergies, including with agencies, funds and programmes, to promote the use of joint services and the sharing of resources, including through co-location. The well-being and working conditions of personnel also requires urgent and close attention and the causes of high morbidity and mortality among Mission staff will be addressed through a stronger medical response.

59. A civilian staffing review will soon be conducted to ensure that the Mission's functional and geographical structure and staffing are adapted to its new mandate. The Mission will also establish an environmental baseline to minimize its environmental impact and decrease its consumption of natural resources and production of waste. It will continuously re-evaluate and enhance its security management practices, measures and resources in order to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and operations.

IV. Observations

60. Early in 2013, the Central African Republic faced staggering levels of violence, massive population displacement and the complete collapse of State institutions. At that time, I urged the international community to act swiftly to sustainably stem the violence. I recommended that the Security Council should authorize the establishment of MINUSCA, while underlining that its deployment should be part of a broader, longer-term engagement of the international community to help the Government and the people to address the root causes of conflict and rebuild the State. I also stressed that there could be no quick fix to the crisis and that the deployment of MINUSCA had to be accompanied by the political commitment of national stakeholders to, among other things, ensure an inclusive political process and transparent governance.

61. The successful completion of the transition and peaceful transfer of power just two years since the establishment of MINUSCA are significant milestones. However, the gains are fragile and could still be reversed. There is now a unique window of opportunity to consolidate the gains of the transition and create the conditions for sustainable peace and socioeconomic recovery. The elected

authorities will have to lead these efforts and demonstrate their ability to govern inclusively and transparently, but continued and sustained support from the international community will be essential. In this regard, I welcome the President's outreach to the armed groups and his vision for a process to bring the reasons for their existence to an end. I encourage him and the Government to pursue this process in the spirit of national reconciliation and inclusiveness, guided by the principles and recommendations emanating from the Bangui Forum, in order to reach durable peace and stability. I urge the armed groups to engage in this process in good faith. The success of a comprehensive effort to reduce the threat posed by armed groups will require progress in key priority areas identified by the President, including disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation; security sector reform, including the reform of the armed forces; combating impunity; supporting justice, reconciliation and the restoration of State authority; and socioeconomic development.

62. A credible and fully functioning security apparatus based on a national vision for the country's security architecture will be fundamental to ensuring a sustainable return to stability. The redeployment of professional and accountable defence and security forces is an important priority. It will be vital to ensure that the redeployment of the security forces, including of the armed forces units to be trained by the European Union training mission, is accompanied within the framework of comprehensive security sector reform efforts that result in clearly delineated functions of the various forces and the transformation of the national defence and internal security forces into professional, multi-ethnic, accountable and regionally balanced forces under the civilian control and oversight of democratically elected institutions. I urge the Government to adopt a national security policy building on the draft endorsed by the transitional authorities. I reiterate my encouragement to the Government to facilitate agreement on the structure and functions of the future defence and security forces, including through the engagement with the armed groups, with regard to the integration of elements that have undergone targeted vetting.

63. I also encourage the authorities to prioritize the development of professional and accountable national police and gendarmerie services that should progressively assume law and order tasks in Bangui and throughout the country. The national police and gendarmerie need to assume their rightful responsibilities for law and order, and the armed forces must disengage from such responsibilities. In the interim, I take note of the President's request that MINUSCA continue to perform its mandate relating to arrest and detention under the urgent temporary measures outlined in paragraph 32 (f) (i) of resolution 2217 (2015). I also urge the Government to undertake the measures necessary for the timely deployment of the international special prosecutor for the Special Criminal Court and call upon the national authorities to implement the reforms necessary to establish an accountable and effective justice and corrections system and an independent judiciary, with a view to progressively delivering basic rule of law services in priority areas.

64. Notwithstanding the progress made during the transition, the country continues to face monumental challenges. The development of a framework of mutual accountability will be an important pillar of the partnership between the Central African Republic and international and regional partners, and I welcome the progress made in this regard under Central African leadership. I also welcome the President's commitment to working closely with the international community in the

formulation of a prioritized and costed national recovery and peacebuilding plan in advance of the conference of donors to be held in Brussels in November. It is essential that the framework of mutual accountability and the national recovery and peacebuilding plan be part of an integrated and coherent package underpinned by a suitable and unified follow-up architecture adapted to the realities of the Central African Republic.

65. The scope of humanitarian needs and displacement inside and outside the country remain alarming. In the past year, while the levels of funding for humanitarian assistance have halved, food insecurity has doubled. One in two Central Africans now faces hunger, while 2.3 million people are still in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection. In addition, 1 million Central Africans remain forcibly displaced and their safe and sustainable reintegration must remain a key priority, as well as a barometer of the peacebuilding process. I urge donors to contribute in order to meet urgent humanitarian requirements, including those outlined in the 2016 humanitarian response plan.

66. Further to the findings of the strategic review outlined here, I recommend that the mandate of MINUSCA be renewed for 18 months, until 31 January 2018, at its currently authorized troop ceiling of 10,750 military personnel, including 480 military observers and staff officers, 2,080 police personnel, including 400 individual police officers and 1,680 formed police unit personnel, and 108 corrections officers.

67. In addition to continuing to prioritize the protection of civilians and supporting the creation of conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, I recommend that the mandate of MINUSCA reflect that the strategic objective of the Mission be to reduce the threat posed by armed groups through the prioritized and sequenced implementation of the three-pronged strategy outlined in paragraphs 32 to 47 above, with the activities described therein. By implementing the approach described herein, I believe that MINUSCA will enter the next phase properly configured and adapted to the post-transition environment as requested by the Security Council. The implementation of the mandate will be predicated on Central African leadership and ownership, sustained international support and the imperative of avoiding a dependency that might be difficult to break.

68. The new posture and the induction of additional capabilities within the currently authorized ceiling will significantly enhance the situational awareness of MINUSCA and ensure a more flexible conduct of operations. Against this backdrop, the need to enhance the capability of some contingents cannot be overemphasized. I urge troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries to take the steps necessary to ensure that the MINUSCA contingents reach their full operating capability. I am concerned about the reported increase in attacks in the south-east of the country attributed to the Lord's Resistance Army and other armed groups. I recommend that MINUSCA continue its efforts to protect civilians through enhanced coordination with the African Union Regional Task Force. In the light of the intention of Uganda to withdraw two battalions from the African Union Regional Task Force, MINUSCA will keep its protection efforts and deployment in the south-east under review.

69. Working together with all relevant partners, including the United Nations country team, will be critical if the proposed approach outlined herein is to be a success. It will require a coherent approach to maximize the impact of our support. I

therefore recommend a strengthened role for MINUSCA in support of the Government's efforts to coordinate international assistance during the coming mandate period. The United Nations is committed to continuing to work together with partners in the subregion and the region that have played a vital role during the transition, including the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, as well as the African Development Bank. The Peacebuilding Commission will also have an important role to play in coordinating and mobilizing partner support for peacebuilding efforts.

70. The implementation of the Mission's mandate will continue to be challenged by the structural constraints inherent in operating in a landlocked country, where operations are particularly difficult owing to, among other things, the limited number of reliable service providers. I am committed to delivering effective, efficient and rapid support while striving for a resource-conscious and environmentally conscious approach. As indicated herein, doing so will be realized by identifying new potential partners and enhancing synergies with existing service providers, while promoting joint interventions, resource sharing and, where possible, co-location. The United Nations will also work to improve the living and working conditions outside Bangui, while accelerating the recruitment of personnel with the skills required to successfully support the Mission in the next phase. This will be done through the implementation of a set of measures to minimize the environmental footprint of the Mission while maximizing the efficient use of natural resources, in keeping with my commitment to establishing the United Nations as a model for sustainable practices.

71. I am outraged by continued reports of sexual exploitation and abuse, in particular by MINUSCA personnel and other international forces. I expect the highest standard of conduct from all United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel. I reiterate that all United Nations personnel must comply with my zero-tolerance policy regarding misconduct. While progress has been made under the leadership of my Special Representative for the Central African Republic and head of MINUSCA, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, on prevention, reporting, coordination and a victim-driven approach to addressing human rights abuses, including sexual exploitation and abuse, MINUSCA will continue to focus on enhancing and improving these mechanisms in close coordination with the United Nations country team. I remain fully committed to ensuring that perpetrators of these appalling abuses are brought to justice. I reiterate my call upon troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries to take vigorous and enhanced preventive predeployment measures and to ensure swift and appropriate disciplinary action and investigations to ensure accountability and justice for victims. In parallel, the United Nations will continue to implement a series of measures in line with resolution 2272 (2016) and the recommendations of the External Independent Review Panel on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic.

72. I am grateful to my Special Representative for his tireless efforts in carrying out the Mission's mandate. I am deeply appreciative of the work carried out by the civilian and uniformed men and women of MINUSCA and the United Nations country team in a demanding environment. I am also grateful to my Special Representative for Central Africa, Abdoulaye Bathily, for his engagement in the subregion in coordination with MINUSCA. I thank troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries, the African Union, the Economic Community of

Central African States, the European Union, the World Bank, international partners and multilateral and non-governmental organizations for their continued efforts to support the people and authorities of the Central African Republic in their pursuit of peace and stability. Moving forward, strengthening the strategic partnership between the Government and MINUSCA, in particular, will be key to ensuring the effective implementation of the international community's support for lasting peace and recovery efforts in the Central African Republic.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 23 December 2013 (S/2013/759), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) until 31 December 2016 and requested me to submit a report every six months on the implementation of its mandate. Following my letter to the Council dated 14 January 2016 (S/2016/88) on the strategic review of the Office of my Special Envoy for the Sahel, the Council requested me, on 28 January 2016, to proceed with the merger of the two offices into the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and asked me to provide an update on the implementation of the mandate of UNOWAS in my next report (see S/2016/89). The present report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2016 and provides an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel. It also outlines the activities of UNOWAS and the progress made in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (S/2015/866).

II. Developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel

2. Since my most recent report (S/2015/1012), several successful electoral processes and installations of new Governments have taken place in the subregion. At the same time, the continuing insecurity in the Lake Chad basin and northern Mali, coupled with the unprecedented terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, raised alarms about the potential spread of terrorist activities to other countries of the subregion.

A. Political developments and trends

3. While elections in several countries were contested, they were generally assessed to be peaceful, credible and transparent. In Benin, the two-round presidential election of 6 and 20 March resulted in victory for Patrice Talon over the ruling coalition's candidate and former Prime Minister, Lionel Zinsou. Following a smooth handover of power, the new President appointed a 21-member Government on 6 April, which includes former presidential contenders and members of the rupture coalition. He also announced that he would seek to implement several

political and constitutional reforms, including an amendment to the Constitution to provide for a single presidential term of seven years.

4. In Cabo Verde, the legislative elections held on 20 March were appraised as peaceful and credible. The opposition Movement for Democracy won an absolute majority of 53 per cent of the votes against the African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde, which had held power since 2001. A new Government of 11 ministers, headed by the Prime Minister, José Ulisses Correia e Silva, took office on 22 April.

5. In the Niger, presidential and legislative elections were held on 21 February and 20 March, respectively. The campaign period was marred by controversies over voter identification and the legal status of the main opposition candidate, Hama Amadou, of the Mouvement démocratique nigérien pour une fédération africaine. Mr. Amadou was detained in November 2015 on charges of child trafficking. On 16 March, four days before election day, he was medically evacuated to France, where he remains as of the date of publication of the present report. In the first round, the incumbent President, Mahamadou Issoufou, garnered 48 per cent of the votes, while Mr. Amadou won 17 per cent. Subsequently, the opposition withdrew from the process, calling for a boycott of the second round. On 20 March, the President was re-elected with 92 per cent of the vote and was sworn into office on 2 April. On 12 April, he appointed a new Government, led by the Prime Minister, Brigi Rafini, composed mainly of members from the ruling Parti nigérien pour la démocratie et le socialisme (PNDS). The Party and its allies hold the majority (118) of the 171 seats in the National Assembly.

6. In Burkina Faso, the new Government, which was inaugurated on 6 January, immediately focused on enhancing the country's security, following a terrorist attack in Ouagadougou on 15 January. It also prioritized increasing its public revenues, addressing social unrest and restoring State authority in some parts of the country. On 16 March, a constitutional commission was established to review constitutional provisions on term limits and the powers of the executive and legislative bodies. Its findings will be submitted to a referendum later in 2016.

7. On 20 February, Côte d'Ivoire arrested and handed over three members of the former presidential guard to the authorities of Burkina Faso. On 28 April, the international arrest warrant issued in January by the Burkina Faso military justice tribunal against the Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, Guillaume Soro, in connection with his alleged involvement in the coup d'état of September 2015, was withdrawn on procedural grounds.

8. In Guinea, the appointment by the President, Alpha Condé, of a new Government on 4 January immediately drew criticism from the ruling Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée because only 4 of the 33 ministers were from the party. Preparations have begun for the holding of local and municipal elections. However, there are disagreements between the ruling party and the opposition over the scope and timetable of the elections, and the Independent National Electoral Commission has stated that the elections cannot technically be held before October. On 30 March, members of the follow-up committee on the political agreement of 20 August 2015 agreed to replace the committee with a broader-based framework for political dialogue. Meanwhile, there has been little progress in the drafting of bills for the reform of the electoral code and the Commission as agreed by the parties to the political agreement.

9. In Mauritania, the Government and the opposition failed to reach agreement on the conditions for the launch of the political dialogue process, prompting demonstrations in February and March by the opposition coalition Forum national pour la démocratie et l'unité. On 15 March, the President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, affirmed his readiness for dialogue during a press conference. The opposition suspended its cooperation, however, alleging that he intended to amend the Constitution and seek another term. Meanwhile, the country saw two Cabinet reshuffles, in February and April. In February, five ministers were relieved of their posts, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In April, four new ministers, including two women, were sworn in. On 3 May, the President called for consultations and a constitutional referendum on the proposal to remove the Senate.

10. In Nigeria, an active anti-corruption campaign was led by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission against the backdrop of a national budgetary and economic crisis linked to, among other things, falling global oil prices. Several high-profile figures were arrested or charged for corruption, including the former Minister of Defence, the former Chief of Defence Staff and other senior officers previously involved in national arms deals. The President of the Senate is also facing trial for allegedly making a false declaration and concealing assets. The Commission has also charged the former leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta with money-laundering, conspiracy and diversion of funds. In February, overturning an appeals court ruling, the Supreme Court confirmed the election of the governors of Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Taraba States. They are all candidates from the opposition People's Democratic Party. On 19 March, incidents of violence marred the rerun of senatorial elections in Rivers State.

11. Violence between cattle herders and farmers increased in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, prompting the President, Muhammadu Buhari to deploy security forces to address the situation. Moreover, secessionist groups in the south-eastern states, such as the Indigenous People of Biafra and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, intensified their political activities, often triggering clashes with security forces.

12. Preparations for presidential elections in Ghana and the Gambia in November and December, respectively, are continuing. In Ghana, opposition parties continued to call for a new voters' register. A limited voter registration exercise was held from 28 April to 8 May. In the Gambia, the Independent Electoral Commission conducted a supplementary voter registration exercise from 14 January to 12 March. On 14 and 16 April, protests by members of the opposition calling for electoral reforms were violently suppressed by police and security forces. Several people, including the leader of the opposition United Democratic Party, Ousainou Darboe, were detained. There were subsequent reports that some detainees, who had not been seen since the time of their arrest, had been killed in State custody. To address these developments and other contentious issues relating to the elections, an inter-party committee held its first meeting on 20 April, after having been dormant for 10 years. Representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the United States of America were present as observers. At the meeting, the ruling and opposition parties agreed to establish an ad hoc committee for dialogue, with the participation of civil society and security authorities, to address political tensions.

13. In Sierra Leone, the Constitutional Review Committee submitted draft recommendations in February. In mid-March, the President, Ernest Bai Koroma, decreed a major Cabinet reshuffle, during which six ministers were dismissed, six transferred to other ministries and six newly appointed. The suspension of the mayor of Koidu, considered to be a close ally of the former Vice-President, Samuel Sam-Sumana, also caused controversy.

14. In Senegal, on 20 March, voters approved by referendum 15 constitutional amendments, including 1 that would reduce the presidential term from seven to five years. The reduction will not affect the current mandate of the President, Macky Sall, which expires in 2019. The new provisions also established the secular nature of Senegal and granted oversight powers to the National Assembly.

15. In Togo, political, constitutional and institutional reforms have not advanced. However, a road map on decentralization and local elections has been adopted by the Government and is awaiting parliamentary review. The constitutional review process is continuing in Liberia and includes a contested proposal to declare Liberia a "Christian nation". The recommendations will be voted on through a referendum.

B. Security trends

16. There was a marked rise in criminal activities and terrorist attacks committed by groups operating across national borders in West Africa and the Sahel. The increase in criminal activities on the borders between the Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, including hostage-takings and human, arms and drug smuggling, underscored the link between terrorist networks and illicit trafficking. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for a terrorist attack in Ouagadougou on 15 January, in which 30 people died and 150 were wounded. It also took responsibility for a terrorist attack in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, on 13 March, during which 19 people were killed and 30 wounded. In the Lake Chad basin, Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon and the Niger continued, while attacks on Chadian territory decreased. Since the beginning of the year, more than 30 attacks took place in the southern Diffa region of the Niger, causing the displacement of thousands of people and exacerbating an already difficult humanitarian situation in the country. The most notable attack took place on 3 June, when heavily armed Boko Haram elements attacked the Nigerien military headquarters in Bosso, killing 26 soldiers from the Niger and 2 soldiers from Nigeria and wounding many. The attack, widely publicized in Boko Haram's online propaganda, was the deadliest attack in the Niger since the beginning of the year. In the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, clashes between herders and farming communities at the end of February led to more than 300 deaths, the displacement of many and disruptions in harvesting. Following the issuance on 14 January of an arrest warrant for a former militant leader on corruption charges, attacks on oil pipelines and kidnappings increased in the Niger Delta, which is a major oil-producing region in Nigeria.

17. In Mali, terrorist and criminal activities have gradually expanded towards the central and southern parts of the country, including in Bamako, with attacks targeting Malian security forces, United Nations peacekeepers and French troops in Operation Barkhane. In the Tillabéri region of the Niger, criminal and jihadist groups have conducted more than 15 attacks since January, resulting in heavy civilian and military casualties.

18. Following the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire in January and March, the Government of Senegal reinforced its border security and created, in January, an operations cell in Dakar focusing on terrorist threats. The country's security services have also carried out several preventive arrests and issued warnings to Senegalese jihadists returning from Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 19 March, the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, in his capacity as Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), called for increased regional cooperation to address the threats posed by terrorist networks. Similar calls were echoed during a meeting on 4 March in N'Djamena of the defence ministers of the Group of Five for the Sahel countries. The ministers affirmed their commitment to establishing a joint force for the Sahel.

19. The African Union has continued to explore options for the possible establishment of an intervention force in northern Mali. From 20 March to 1 April, it undertook a preliminary assessment visit to Mali as part of the process of conceptualizing and operationalizing the initiative. Meanwhile, the defence ministers of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, in a meeting held on 24 and 25 March in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, decided to establish joint border patrols and a regional counter-terrorism centre in Cairo.

20. Following a visit by the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, to Guinea and Sierra Leone on 6 May, the Presidents of the three countries agreed to cooperate in the area of intelligence-sharing to combat terrorism in the region. On 13 May, at a ministerial-level meeting of the Mano River Union Joint Security Committee, held in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, the participants adopted agreements aimed at strengthening collaboration on terrorism, maritime security and border security.

21. Across the region, there were several reports of drug seizures. In January, the Bolivian authorities seized a shipment of 8 tons of cocaine destined for Côte d'Ivoire, while the Spanish police intercepted a boat carrying 500 (kg) of cocaine near Cabo Verde. In Mauritania, the security forces seized 1.3 tons of marijuana in January. A further 280 kg of cocaine was seized from two foreign vessels by the Cabo Verdean authorities in April. In Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency dismantled a large-scale methamphetamine production facility in Delta State on 13 March. Meanwhile, incidents of maritime piracy have also increased, and the International Maritime Bureau has recorded at least six attacks and six attempted attacks in the Gulf of Guinea since January.

Counter-terrorism and Boko Haram violence

22. The security situation in the Lake Chad basin continues to be a source of concern, notwithstanding the military gains made along the Chadian-Nigerian border. A total of 78 Boko Haram attacks have been reported since January in Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, resulting in some 700 deaths, compared with 1,200 during the same period in 2015. Kano, Jigawa and Bauchi States in Nigeria have been largely spared from attacks, which represents a positive change from 2015. Meanwhile, Borno and Yobe States have endured multiple raids and suicide bombings targeting villages and military positions. On 20 April, the convoy of the officer commanding the seventh division was ambushed on the road from Maiduguri to Bama.

23. The rise in the number of attacks against returnees and internally displaced persons in camps in Borno State has affected national plans for resettlement and the

launching of rehabilitation efforts. In a series of raids on the village of Dalori, 10 km from Maiduguri, 105 civilians were killed in January. The attackers also attempted to raid a nearby camp hosting 25,000 displaced persons, but were repelled by the army. On 9 February, 56 people were killed and 80 injured in a double suicide bombing at a camp for the displaced in Dikwa.

24. Since January, operations by the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Nigerian military have resulted in the rescue of more than 2,300 abductees, mostly in Borno State, and the arrest of key members of Boko Haram, including the leader of its offspring sect, Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan. In addition, the Task Force and the Nigerian armed forces have significantly reduced the capacity of Boko Haram to conduct major operations by severing several of its major supply routes.

25. In the Niger, the southern region of Diffa has been the target of recurrent attacks by Boko Haram, especially on military convoys and outposts. The Bosso and Nguigmi regions have also been the target of suicide bombings and improvised explosive device attacks, showing the continuous pressure exercised by Boko Haram on the northern shore of Lake Chad.

26. With enhanced intelligence-sharing and continuous support from partners, the Multinational Joint Task Force has achieved progress under a unified command. In February, Nigerian and Cameroonian troops conducted joint operations that destroyed Boko Haram hideouts along the border. In April, an intelligence fusion cell similar to that established in Abuja in 2014 was established at Task Force headquarters in N'Djamena to enhance the conduct of joint operations. In May, Benin deployed 150 of the 450 troops pledged to join the Task Force. On 3 May, the President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, visited Nigeria, where he reaffirmed his determination to root out Boko Haram.

C. Socioeconomic trends

27. Despite security challenges, the lingering impact of the Ebola virus disease outbreak and a fragile economic environment, West Africa sustained a growth rate of 4.2 per cent in 2015. The rate is expected to increase to 6.2 per cent in 2016, according to figures released in February by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. Inflation is projected to remain low in the countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, but may reach 12.5 per cent in Ghana owing to the depreciation of the national currency. Nigeria is also facing significant challenges stemming from shortfalls in oil revenue, a deterioration in the finances of state and local governments and disruptions in private sector activities caused by a lack of access to foreign exchange. While import-dependent countries have benefited from the drop in oil prices, low commodity prices have had a heavy impact on countries exporting raw materials.

28. In Mauritania, the severe drop in the price of iron ore has had a serious impact on State revenue, while shipments of iron ore from Sierra Leone have resumed. Agricultural production and exports in Côte d'Ivoire have registered growth as a result of government policies to diversify the economy. Meanwhile, trade between the Gambia and Senegal has been negatively affected since February, following the closure of the border in response to a significant increase in tariffs levied by the

Gambia on commercial trucks. This resulted in a reduced supply of basic commodities and a significant increase in prices on both sides of the border.

D. Humanitarian trends

29. The humanitarian situation in West Africa and the Sahel continues to be affected by chronic food insecurity and malnutrition. Recent post-harvest surveys reveal that malnutrition rates in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Nigeria could worsen further during the lean season. Across the Sahel, 4.5 million people remain displaced, 6 million people need emergency food assistance and some 5.9 million children under 5 years of age are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2016. To provide assistance, the United Nations has appealed for $1.98 billion in 2016, of which only 11 per cent has been received.

30. Across the Lake Chad basin, at least 2.4 million displaced persons, a majority of whom are women and children, are exposed to the risk of exploitation and abuse. Overall, 7 million people in north-east Nigeria and almost 500,000 in the Diffa region of the Niger are estimated to be in need of assistance. Meanwhile, efforts for resettlement and recovery are continuing. There are also indications of a food crisis looming in north-east Nigeria, owing to the disruption in farming and herding activities. According to preliminary findings from a joint United Nations assessment of the situation in Borno and Yobe States, in north-east Nigeria, carried out in April, an estimated 800,000 people are in need of urgent food assistance, while 350,000 children suffer from severe malnutrition. Also in Nigeria, communal violence on 28 February between herders and farming communities in Benue State reportedly resulted in the displacement of thousands of civilians.

31. On 15 March, the Nigerian Senate approved the allocation of $50 million for the relocation, rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced people in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States. In April, the European Union allocated €67 million euros for the rehabilitation and reintegration of captured Boko Haram elements. On 19 April, the United States announced the provision of $40 million for humanitarian assistance to countries affected by Boko Haram. Meanwhile, the Nigerian Presidential Committee on the North-East continues to oversee and coordinate the implementation of national initiatives such as the Presidential Initiative for the North-East, the Victim Support Fund and the Safe Schools Initiative. Efforts to harmonize the activities of the National Emergency Management Commission and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons continued with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors.

32. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded monthly migration movements of some 10,000 to 12,000 people leaving the Niger towards countries of the Maghreb since the beginning of 2016. It also recorded an average of 2,000 to 3,000 migrants returning to the Niger from those destinations. In April, movements towards Libya and Algeria surged, with close to 11,000 people reportedly transiting through the Niger between 19 to 25 April. Those involved in outgoing journeys towards Libya and Algeria were mostly from the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, while returning migrants were mostly from Mali and the Niger. IOM established a presence in Agadez, the Niger, in February to improve the monitoring of incoming and outgoing movements. From 9 to 11 February, a meeting was held in Accra under the framework of European

Union-ECOWAS cooperation on the implementation of the Valletta Action Plan, during which ECOWAS pledged to tackle migration through investment in livelihoods in rural areas.

33. On 17 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the end of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. On the same day, however, a new transmission was registered in Nzérékoré, Guinea. Another case was recorded in Monrovia on 1 April. This triggered the closure of the Liberian border with Guinea and restrictions along the Sierra Leonean border with Guinea. On 29 March, WHO announced that the outbreak no longer constituted a public health emergency and called for the lifting of all travel and trade restrictions. Some countries, including Ghana and Togo, are also working to contain outbreaks of meningitis. Cases of cholera have also been reported in Nigeria, while Benin, Nigeria and Togo have reported outbreaks of Lassa fever.

E. Trends on human rights

34. The overall human rights situation in West Africa and the Sahel remains a source of concern, especially in the context of continuing attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups. In Burkina Faso, on 22 March, the President, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, inaugurated the High Council for Reconciliation and National Unity, which will examine human rights violations committed by State authorities between 1960 and 2015. On 26 March, the National Assembly adopted a law on the creation of a new national human rights commission. In Togo, on 11 March, the National Assembly adopted a bill on the composition and functioning of the National Human Rights Commission.

35. In Mauritania, on 3 March, the Council of Ministers adopted a law on gender-based violence and established a national anti-slavery day on 6 March. On 14 March, however, security forces used tear gas against a demonstration by the Initiative pour la résurgence du mouvement abolitioniste calling for the release of its imprisoned leader, Biram Dah Abeid. On 17 May, the Supreme Court ordered his release. On 4 March, during my visit to Mauritania, I urged the authorities to uphold human rights, including through legislative instruments, and to ensure that security forces abided by those principles.

36. In Guinea, the nomination in February of General Mathurin Bangoura as the new governor of Conakry led to negative reactions from victims and human rights defenders, given his indictment in June 2015 for involvement in the massacre carried out at the city's stadium on 28 September 2009. On 16 and 17 April, during a joint visit to the country with the United States Under-Secretary of State, Sarah Sewall, my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict encouraged the authorities to accelerate the judicial process relating to the events of September 2009 to ensure justice for the victims.

37. Following the violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations on 14 and 16 April in the Gambia, I called for an independent investigation into the events, including the alleged death and torture of opposition members while in State custody. ECOWAS, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights also called for an independent investigation. In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in which it requested foreign countries to desist from interfering in the

national affairs of the Gambia. The United Democratic Party leader, Ousainou Darboe, and at least 19 fellow party members who were arrested while participating in the demonstrations have been charged with seven criminal offences, comprising intent to breach the peace and provoke others to do the same; rioting and assembling without a permit; incitement of violence; riotously interfering with vehicles; holding a procession without a permit; disobeying an order to disperse from an unlawful procession; and conspiracy. To date, 13 detainees, including 6 women, have reportedly been released on bail. At least 19 remain in detention, however. On 14 May, the United Democratic Party issued a press release in which it outlined allegations of human rights violations committed by the Government and expressed concern about how the court proceedings were being conducted. It called for the immediate and unconditional release of the detainees and for an investigation into the alleged death of the party member and into reports of torture. It also called upon security forces to stop preventing peaceful demonstrations and to ensure the security of party officials and members. Meanwhile, the trial of the executive director of the Teranga FM radio station, Alagie Ceesay, charged in August 2015 with seven criminal offences, including sedition, continued. On 22 April, he reportedly disappeared from a hospital to which he had been admitted for medical care. His whereabouts remain unknown. During a recent tour of the country, the President was quoted as making divisive and hateful remarks about a particular ethnic group, raising serious concerns.

38. In Nigeria, in April, two years after the abduction of more than 270 schoolgirls in Chibok on 14 April 2014, a video surfaced that showed 15 of the abductees alive. The Minister of Information subsequently confirmed that negotiations were continuing with Boko Haram for the girls' release. Meanwhile, allegations of illegal detention and abuse by the military against Shia demonstrators in Kaduna State in December 2015 have emerged and prompted a national inquiry. On 21 April, a human rights lawyer filed a case with the ECOWAS Court of Justice against the Government of Nigeria for not preventing the killings, rapes and maiming perpetrated by herders against farmers. The Nigerian armed forces, with United Nations support, adopted a code of conduct on 13 March for the protection of human rights. They have also established a human rights desk, composed of six legal officers from the Nigerian Bar Association and the legal section of the army.

F. Trends on gender issues

39. Regional efforts to ensure gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of women in political and electoral processes have progressed. Of the 29 ministers in the new Government in Burkina Faso, 7 are women; of the 36 ministers in Côte d'Ivoire, 9 are women; and, of the 12 ministers in Cabo Verde, 4 are women. In Guinea's new Government, women hold the key portfolios of economy and finance, foreign affairs, agriculture, public works, and planning and international cooperation. In the Niger, the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions was validated in February. The Government also established a national observatory for gender promotion. However, the number of female ministers in the new Government does not comply with the legal provision of a 25 per cent minimum, which has prompted protests by women's associations. A new labour code in Côte d'Ivoire includes provisions against moral and sexual

harassment. In Sierra Leone, the President refused to sign the Safe Abortion Act, which was passed by the Parliament in December 2015.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Merger of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and the United Nations Office for West Africa

40. A strategic review of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel was conducted by the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat from October to December 2015. The purpose of the review was to determine whether adjustments were required to the objectives and institutional design of the Office. On 14 January, I presented the findings of the review to the Security Council, indicating my intention to initiate a "light merger" of the Office of the Special Envoy and UNOWA, whereby existing capacity to support the integrated strategy would remain largely unchanged, except for its reporting line through my Special Representative for West Africa and Head of UNOWA (see S/2016/88). On 28 January, the Council requested me to proceed with the merger with a view to maximizing synergies by ensuring a unified management and structure of UNOWAS (see S/2016/89). My Special Representative for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, has since assumed the function of my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, while my former Special Envoy for the Sahel, Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, has assumed the function of my Deputy Special Representative and Deputy Head of UNOWAS. I have also established a liaison cell in Nouakchott to strengthen United Nations engagement with the secretariat of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and a new coordination and regional partnerships section within UNOWAS, while maintaining overall staffing levels with no additional budgetary cost. The newly reconfigured office will build upon the existing mandates of UNOWA and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, including by continuing to exercise its good offices and to implement the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

41. From 25 May to 2 June, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel undertook a tour of Group of Five for the Sahel countries during which he met with the Group's permanent secretariat, the Presidents of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, the Prime Minister of Chad and other senior government representatives. During his consultations, my Special Representative provided an update on the implementation of the merger of UNOWA and the Office of my Special Envoy and reaffirmed the continuing support of the United Nations for the multidimensional challenges faced by the countries of the Group. In his meeting with diplomatic and other partners, he advocated for a holistic approach in line with the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, taking into account the nexus between peace, security and development.

Good offices and special assignments

42. My Special Representative conducted several visits to the Niger in the run-up to the elections in February to build consensus on the voters' list. He met the main

contenders before the release of the provisional results, following the first round, in coordination with ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States. Before the run-off, he advised the parties to resume political dialogue through the established mechanisms. With the support of extrabudgetary funding, UNOWAS also dispatched a technical team, comprising political and human rights officers, to support his good offices throughout the electoral process.

43. In Benin, my Special Representative met the presidential candidates, political parties and electoral management bodies ahead of the first round of elections on 6 March, with the aim of resolving outstanding issues relating to voter cards. From 22 to 24 March, following the release of provisional results, he met the President-elect, Patrice Talon, the outgoing Prime Minister, Lionel Zinsou, and relevant national institutions to, among others, commend them for the successful conduct of the polls and the democratic spirit displayed by both candidates and voters.

44. In Guinea, my Special Representative conducted two missions to resolve differences between the political leaders and support the momentum towards the holding of local elections. Following the discontinuation in March of the follow-up committee on the political agreement of 20 August 2015, he also advocated the prompt establishment of a new broad-based forum in which to address contentious issues and debate legal and institutional reforms for adoption by the National Assembly.

45. On 2 and 3 March, I visited Burkina Faso, where I commended the President for his efforts to reform the security services and for his plans to promote a national reconciliation process. I reiterated my commitment to mobilizing the international community in support of national efforts to promote sustainable development. Further to the President's request for support to reform the armed forces and security apparatus, my Special Representative travelled with my Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support to Ouagadougou on 18 March to further identify areas for United Nations support for security sector reform, national reconciliation, justice and the rule of law. On 1 April, my Special Representative, the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security co-chaired in Ouagadougou the fifth meeting of the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso, which they agreed to rename the International Support Group for the Consolidation of Democracy and Economic Recovery in Burkina Faso.

46. On 4 and 5 March, I visited Mauritania and met the President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and the Prime Minister, Yahya Ould Hademine, to discuss collaboration among Sahelian countries on development and regional security issues. We also discussed national efforts in promoting political dialogue, social cohesion and human rights. I welcomed the Government's commitment to addressing slavery and its aftermath, together with other commitments relating to the elimination of torture. I also welcomed the country's efforts to strengthen its democracy, while urging the authorities to forge solutions to the many challenges facing the Sahel, through the Group of Five for the Sahel and the African Union.

47. On 22 and 23 April, during a visit of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to Ouagadougou, the national authorities requested assistance in the drafting of a counter-terrorism strategy and support to enhance counter-

terrorism coordination efforts. The Executive Directorate also visited Ghana from 20 to 22 April to assess the country's preparedness to prevent and respond to terrorist incidents, as well as to advise the authorities on the development of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

48. Insecurity in the northern Cameroon-Nigeria border areas as a result of Boko Haram-related violence continued to pose a challenge to efforts to expedite the completion of the work of the Commission, including the remaining demarcation work. As Chair of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, my Special Representative held consultations in Yaoundé and Abuja in February and March with the heads of the Cameroonian and Nigerian delegations to the Commission, Cabinet members and national border commissions to agree on priorities and modalities to be employed in completing the border demarcation. The third phase of pillar emplacement was finalized in March, with 238 pillars added, bringing the number of posts erected to 903 of a total of 2,969 for the entire border. The emplacement project was accompanied by a review of socioeconomic projects to benefit the affected border communities. The review's outcome was transmitted to the Minister of Finance of Cameroon on 8 March. Feasibility studies on activities to be undertaken with Nigerian counterparts are also being conducted.

Enhancing subregional capacity to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

Security sector reform

49. From 27 to 31 March, UNOWAS, with the support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, conducted a visit to the ECOWAS Commission to extend support for the adoption and implementation of its Regional Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance and to promote a coordinated security sector reform approach in the region. Other areas of cooperation were also discussed, including the conduct of joint assessment and support missions and joint advocacy to and training for key government entities and the leaders of armed forces.

50. In Guinea, the United Nations Senior Security Sector Reform Adviser continued to support national stakeholders in advancing reform efforts, including through the development of legal texts and the implementation of decisions in the defence and police sectors. He is also supporting the inclusion of a security sector reform steering committee in the Supreme Defence Council.

Strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union

51. From 25 to 27 January, UNOWAS and the Mano River Union held a technical meeting at the Union's secretariat, in Freetown, to develop a joint workplan on resuming the implementation of the strategy for cross-border security in the Union. Implementation of the strategy had been put on hold following the Ebola outbreak. My Special Representative and the Union Secretary-General endorsed the workplan during a meeting held in Dakar on 29 April. On 12 and 13 May, UNOWAS provided technical assistance to a meeting of Union countries, before the Joint Security Committee meeting held on 14 May in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

52. From 14 to 30 March, 30 countries from West and Southern Africa and Europe took part in a naval exercise in the Gulf of Guinea aimed at enhancing interoperational capabilities and regional cooperation. During the reporting period, 15 piracy incidents off the Nigerian coast and in the Niger Delta were recorded.

53. Some progress was made towards the implementation of the decisions adopted in Yaoundé in June 2013 on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. On 12 February, my Special Representatives for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel attended an extraordinary meeting between the heads of the Economic Community of Central African States, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. The participants pledged to operationalize the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea by 1 July in Yaoundé, to coincide with the inauguration of the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in West Africa, to be located in Abidjan. The headquarters for zone E, which will cover Benin, the Niger, Nigeria and Togo, and be based in Cotonou, Benin, continues to be constrained by financial limitations. My Special Representative is undertaking fundraising efforts for the establishment in Ghana of the headquarters for zone F, which comprises Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. He is also supporting efforts by ECOWAS to identify a host for the headquarters for zone G, which comprises Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Senegal. ECOWAS is currently recruiting leadership staff for the Interregional Coordination Centre.

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

54. Within the framework of the West Africa Coast Initiative, in February, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel and the Regional Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) agreed to combine efforts to accelerate the establishment of a transnational crime unit in Guinea. They have approached development partners, including the European Union, France, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States for support for the unit.

Implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

55. In implementing the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, UNOWAS continued to focus on mobilizing and coordinating international support for the Sahel, supporting regional cooperation efforts and coordinating United Nations activities in support of the Sahel.

56. UNOWAS continued to provide funding for the development of programmes under the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel. It also continued to co-chair regular sessions of the technical secretariat of the Platform and supported the Platform's four thematic groups on the areas of governance, security, resilience and development. UNOWAS also engaged with potential donor countries to support resource mobilization efforts by funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and to accelerate the implementation of regional programmes.

57. UNOWAS strengthened its cooperation with the Group of Five for the Sahel. On 25 March, the Office established a liaison cell in Nouakchott, following

consultations with the Group of Five for the Sahel permanent secretariat and key partners. UNOWAS deployed specialists to help the permanent secretariat establish a cell on the prevention of radicalization and to develop a plan of action to operationalize the declaration of the Group of Five for the Sahel on efforts to combat radicalization and violent extremism in the Sahel, adopted in Niamey on 14 May 2015. The permanent secretariat has requested support in other areas, which is currently under review.

58. Cooperation was also strengthened at the headquarters level. The Secretariat convened four meetings with the permanent representatives of the Group of Five for the Sahel countries to the United Nations in New York to discuss the merger between UNOWA and the Office of my Special Envoy for the Sahel and the evaluation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, in accordance with the Security Council's request (see S/PRST/2015/24).

59. UNOWAS continued to provide technical support to other United Nations entities for the development of regional projects. A total of 19 regional projects are at various stages of development or implementation within the governance, security and resilience pillars of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. These include nine flagship projects developed jointly with the Group of Five for the Sahel permanent secretariat. Under the governance pillar, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Government of Mali organized a conference on 10 and 11 March on border management and border communities in the Sahel. Attended by 150 participants, the conference examined how to enhance the participation of border communities, particularly women and young people, in stabilization and security initiatives. A follow-up meeting between the Group of Five for the Sahel Permanent Secretary, regional directors and representatives of United Nations entities to review the outcome of the meeting within the larger framework of the integrated strategy was held on 25 March in Dakar.

60. Under the security pillar, UNODC continued to provide assistance to establish the legal and institutional framework for cooperation on security and defence between the Group of Five for the Sahel States, including the Security Cooperation Platform. The UNODC Sahel Programme has focused on efforts to combat corruption and trafficking in persons and on firearms control and border management. The Programme implemented more than 190 activities in the region, reaching 6,000 beneficiaries since January 2014. In December 2015, with legal expertise provided by UNODC, Burkina Faso adopted an updated counter-terrorism law that addresses foreign terrorist fighters. Since January, numerous seizures have been made by the Joint Port Control Unit of the Dakar seaport, with counterfeit medicine to the value of over $380,000 seized aboard four containers and 18 stolen vehicles intercepted in Dakar. During the UNODC Sahel Programme steering committee meeting held in Dakar in April, representatives of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Sahel and Maghreb countries agreed to focus on foreign terrorist fighters, the treatment of children associated with terrorist groups, wildlife and forest offences, trafficking in cultural property, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

61. Under its regional project on coordinated border management in Mali, the Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso, IOM supported the development of joint border protocols. The flagship project on harnessing the future of the Sahel through

the demographic dividend, which is aimed at reducing child mortality and enhancing gender equality, was officially launched in Niamey on 2 November 2015, under the resilience pillar. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued to provide technical support to Group of Five for the Sahel countries for the formulation of national resilience priorities. FAO is also coordinating a project on information management, risk and vulnerability analysis and resilience measurement in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal.

62. In the presidential statement of 8 December 2015 (S/PRST/2015/24), the Security Council requested the United Nations to support Sahelian countries in their efforts to counter terrorism and address conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism. In this regard, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force has initiated plans to explore modalities to expand its Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism initiative to all the member countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel, to complement the initiative implemented in Mali. In April, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate also held consultations with Burkina Faso to reaffirm the Committee's continued support for counter-terrorism activities of States in West Africa and the Sahel and to promote regional cooperation.

63. In the same presidential statement, the Security Council also requested me to include in my next report detailed information on the financial contributions towards boosting economic growth and eradicating poverty, through projects that would support peace and security efforts in the Sahel. The process of gathering data on these aspects is continuing, and I will present my findings in my next report on West Africa and the Sahel, which is due in December.

64. The Secretariat, in consultation with Member States, other United Nations entities and relevant stakeholders, initiated the process for the evaluation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

65. On 6 April, UNOWAS participated in the fifty-eighth session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, during which country-specific human rights issues were discussed. On 8 March, in partnership with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNOWAS organized a conference on the role of women in the promotion of peace and development. In line with efforts to support civil society in the areas of human rights and governance, UNOWAS participated in the regional non-governmental organizations meeting held in Banjul from 3 to 5 April, during which discussions focused on Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security and efforts to combat impunity. On 29 March, UNOWAS organized a consultative meeting with civil society, youth organizations, United Nations entities and academic experts on the theme of social exclusion. At the meeting, participants discussed youth marginalization, slavery and other related issues and called upon national Governments to fully implement the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness, adopted in 2015.

66. In April and May, UNOWAS held discussions with ECOWAS with a view to developing joint gender advocacy initiatives. With the support of the United Nations

Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and UNDP, the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa held two thematic exchanges with women leaders in the region to enhance their involvement in the prevention of violent extremism. In April and June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) contributed to the organization of two thematic exchanges between the Working Group and UNOWAS on extremism and on women's participation in public life.

Inter-institutional cooperation

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

67. From 11 to 20 February, UNOWAS participated in the strategic review of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, in preparation for the drawdown of the mission in 2017. The strategic review highlighted the need to advance national reconciliation and justice processes, enhance national capacity for small arms control and resolve outstanding issues pertaining to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants. The strategic review noted that continuous instability at the Ivorian border areas with Burkina Faso, Mali and Liberia required consistent cooperation between national security services and regional organizations. In March, my Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support travelled to Côte d'Ivoire to identify areas for programmatic support to help to address drivers of conflict, including through cross-border initiatives.

68. From 4 to 6 April, my Special Representative dispatched a joint technical mission by UNOWAS, OHCHR, UNDP and the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat to the Gambia to assess the situation ahead of the presidential elections of December 2016. The mission met the electoral management bodies, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the justice authorities, civil society and diplomatic partners.

69. On 20 May, my Special Representative hosted the high-level meeting of heads of West Africa-based United Nations peace missions, held in Dakar. The participants discussed, among others, the progress made in democratic transitions in West Africa and the impact of environmental degradation on countries in West Africa and the Sahel. They agreed to continue to cooperate closely and share information on key issues affecting the subregion.

Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

70. From 12 to 19 February, my Special Representatives for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel conducted their third joint tour to the Boko Haram-affected countries of Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria to assess progress made in the regional response. They discussed United Nations support in a number of areas, including communications and outreach and reintegration. They also discussed the humanitarian and human rights situation.

71. On 14 May, my Special Representative attended the second Regional Security Summit, held in Abuja. The Presidents of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, France, Gabon, the Niger, Senegal and Togo, the Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the United States Deputy Secretary of State and African Union and European Union

representatives attended the meeting. The participants acknowledged the progress made by the Multinational Joint Task Force and committed themselves to further strengthening cooperation in response to the crisis. Partners pledged support to efforts to combat Boko Haram and to rehabilitation efforts. The European Union announced a contribution of €50 million for the Task Force, while the United Kingdom announced bilateral support to Nigeria in the amount of £40 million.

72. On 27 and 28 January, UNOWAS and ECOWAS held a joint working session in Abuja to assess developments in the subregion and identify joint activities, such as support for security sector reform in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, the implementation of the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on Maritime Safety and Security in Their Common Maritime Domain and joint initiatives for mediation.

73. As referred to above, UNOWAS strengthened its cooperation with the Group of Five for the Sahel permanent secretariat and with the Group's member countries (see paras. 55 to 57).

IV. Observations and recommendations

74. While marred by the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire and the continued violence in the Lake Chad basin and in Mali, the overall situation in the region has generally been positive. I am encouraged by the successful holding of peaceful and credible elections and the smooth democratic transitions in several West African countries. I am hopeful that this trend will continue. I encourage countries of the region, including Guinea, Mauritania and the Niger, to engage in political dialogue with the opposition in the spirit of tolerance, openness and inclusivity. The continuing collaboration, including the good offices missions jointly carried out, by the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS will continue to be instrumental in facilitating inclusive dialogue, promoting democratic principles and preventing the escalation of tensions in countries of the subregion.

75. I reiterate my call upon the Government of the Gambia to conduct an independent investigation to shed full light on the events of 14 and 16 April, including with respect to the allegations of torture and deaths of detainees while in State custody. I also urge the Government to follow due process in the prosecution of those detained. I encourage the Gambian authorities to allow their citizens to exercise their freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, as enshrined in the country's Constitution. I am encouraged by the resumption of political dialogue through the reactivated inter-party committee and urge the Government to create a conducive environment that will allow for peaceful, credible and transparent elections in December.

76. I am deeply concerned by the unprecedented terrorist attacks that have taken place in some countries in West Africa that were not previously affected. I welcome the leadership demonstrated by countries in West Africa and the Sahel in spearheading initiatives to tackle security challenges in the region. I encourage further collaboration between the Member States concerned and relevant regional organizations, with United Nations support, to address the underlying drivers of conflict relating to development, social exclusion and challenges to good governance. UNOWAS will continue its partnership and collaboration with the subregion to address these challenges holistically.

77. I reiterate the United Nations dedication to ensuring the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, in close collaboration with Member States, regional organizations, including the Group of Five for the Sahel, and other relevant stakeholders. In this regard, I established an UNOWAS Liaison Office in Nouakchott to help deepen the United Nations collaboration with the Group and to identify opportunities for joint initiatives in support of countries of the region to address the drivers of instability. The United Nations-Group of Five for the Sahel road map will also provide a comprehensive framework for strengthened collaboration between the two entities in areas of common interest, including in support of the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

78. I commend the renewed efforts made by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria in the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force to address the threat of Boko Haram and reiterate my call for all counter-insurgency efforts to be conducted in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. I welcome the assistance provided by regional and international partners in support of these efforts and encourage them to increase their support to boost the region's action, including activities that seek to address the underlying root causes that led to the emergence of Boko Haram. I am concerned about the significant humanitarian needs and I encourage donors to support the humanitarian response in the Lake Chad basin region, which remains critically underfunded. This will help to alleviate the plight of the internally displaced, refugee and returnee populations in all affected countries.

79. I commend the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for its continued efforts to implement the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002. I am encouraged by the continued collaboration between the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to ensure the completion of the border demarcation and provide confidence-building measures to the affected border communities. My Special Representative will continue to provide his good offices to help to resolve any outstanding issues and assist the two parties in mobilizing resources.

80. In conclusion, I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Governments of West Africa and the Sahel region, the ECOWAS Commission, the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Mano River Union and the Group of Five for the Sahel for their continued cooperation with UNOWAS. I also extend my gratitude to all entities of the United Nations system in West Africa and the Sahel, civil society organizations and other institutions for their close partnership with UNOWAS in the implementation of its mandate. I express particular appreciation to my Special Representative, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the staff of UNOWAS and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their efforts to advance peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel.

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Security Council
Seventy-first year

Identical letters dated 22 June 2016 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Since our previous letter to you, dated 16 June 2016, the Palestinian people, including children, have continued to be killed, injured and terrorized as a result of Israel's ongoing violations of international law, humanitarian law and human rights law throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Unprotected, despite the very clear provisions of international law according protection to civilians under foreign occupation, the Palestinian people continue to endure countless human rights violations and war crimes at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces. Tensions have consequently remained high, and anger, fear and frustration among our people are rising as the faith that peace can ever be achieved continues to fade with each passing day.

Each letter that we send to you not only contains a list of just some of the crimes committed by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people and their land but also tragically contains names and stories of innocent lives that were lost at the hands of the occupation. And with each name and story, a new cycle of hate and anger fester among an occupied people who have been left defenceless against a monstrous occupying Power that unleashes its lethal weaponry against them on a daily basis. No doubt Israel, the occupying Power, has been bolstered by the culture of impunity and lawlessness that continues to prevail owing to the failure of the international community to hold Israel accountable for any of its violations and crimes against the Palestinian people and throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Such impunity has not only absolved Israel from its legal obligations as an occupying Power but has emboldened its continued perpetration of crimes without fear of punishment.

A prime example of the occupying Power's sheer brutality took place yesterday, 21 June 2016, when the Palestinian people were faced yet again with immense grief and sorrow owing to the loss of yet another child at the hands of the

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occupation. The latest young boy to fall victim to the viciousness of the Israeli occupying forces was Mahmoud Ra'fat Badran (age 15), from the village of Beit Ur al-Tahta in the occupied West Bank. Mahmoud, along with his brothers Amir (age 16) and Hadi (age 17), as well as their friends Daoud Abu Hassan (age 16) and Majd Badran (age 16), were coming back from a visit to the only nearby swimming pool. Their vehicle was en route home on a road close to an Israeli-only bypass road, which is also referred to as "road 443" or the "apartheid road". Suddenly, the car came under heavy gunfire by nearby Israeli occupying forces, killing Mahmoud and seriously injuring the other young boys in the car. The Palestine Red Crescent Society said that Israeli occupying forces prevented paramedics from attending to the injured Palestinian boys for over 90 minutes. Moreover, three of the young boys who were finally treated in a hospital had bullet wounds to the head and chest.

It should be noted that "road 443" is an Israeli-only road that is 15 miles long, with more than half of the road cutting through the occupied West Bank. In addition to violating Palestinians' freedom of movement and access, with devastating repercussions on health, education and livelihoods, such apartheid roads have consolidated and strengthened the presence of illegal Israeli settlements across the occupied West Bank, ensuring superior access for illegal settlers at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian civilian population.

With regard to the tragic killing of Mahmoud, a military spokeswoman of the occupying Power stated that the young boys were "mistakenly hit" while Israeli occupying forces were responding to alleged reports that Palestinians were "throwing rocks and firebombs" at illegal settlers on the above-mentioned Israeli-only road. The international community must not accept that the occupying Power, which, according to the Fourth Geneva Convention, has the obligation to protect the occupied people, continues to "mistakenly hit" Palestinian civilians, including children. Even if they were responding to alleged stone throwing, how can that ever justify riddling a car with bullets and shooting people in the head and chest? How can the occupying Power, which also happens to be a full member of the United Nations, be allowed to conduct itself in such a criminal manner, killing, injuring and destroying the lives of so many Palestinians, day in and day out? And how can the international community continue to allow the occupying Power to commit such crimes with complete impunity? The Palestinian leadership calls for an international investigation into this latest crime in order to hold the perpetrators accountable for their crimes and for destroying the lives of yet another Palestinian family. Enough is enough.

Sadly, for the family of Mahmoud, this is not the first tragedy they have faced because of Israel's 50-year occupation. In fact, Mahmoud's father, a diplomat with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, was a prisoner of the occupation and was held in an Israeli prison for 16 years. In addition to that, while he was in prison, his family home was demolished by Israeli occupying forces. And now, the family is mourning the cold-blooded murder of their eldest son, Mahmoud, whose body still remains with the occupying Power and has not been returned to his family for a proper burial. At the same time, Mahmoud's family is at the hospital bedside of their other two sons, praying for their survival as they continue to fight for their lives as a result of bullet wounds to the head and chest. This is just one example of how lives under occupation are shattered by the policies of occupation.

While it is impossible to record every single crime perpetrated daily by the Israeli occupying forces and terrorist settlers against the Palestinian people, listed below are just some of the many crimes committed by Israel in the recent period, including home demolitions, mass arrests and detentions, which, along with its ongoing illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, are all clearly intended to make the lives of Palestinian civilians as miserable as possible, and which severely affect every man, woman and child.

15 June 2016

- Israeli occupying forces detained 11 Palestinians, mostly during predawn raids into the West Bank.
- A Palestinian youth, Saleh Abu al-'Anad (age 21), sustained serious wounds when he was run over by an Israeli occupying vehicle during a predawn raid into Balata refugee camp, east of the city of Nablus.
- Israeli navy forces detained 10 Palestinian fishermen while they were sailing offshore of Gaza.

16 June 2016

- Israeli occupying forces stole five Palestinian-owned cars during a predawn campaign in the village of Bal'in, west of Ramallah.
- Israeli occupying forces injured two Palestinian minors and detained eight Palestinians in a predawn raid across the West Bank.

18 June 2016

- Israeli occupying forces in a jeep chased four Palestinians while they were walking down a street near the town of Azoun in Qalqilia, running over a youth, Hamza 'Oweisat, and detaining the rest.

19 June 2016

- Israeli occupying forces detained 14 Palestinians, including two women, during predawn raids across the West Bank.
- Israeli occupying forces stationed to the east of Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, opened heavy machine-gun fire on farmers, preventing them from reaching their land.
- A young Palestinian man, Arif Jaradat (age 21), who had Down syndrome, succumbed to his wounds sustained on 4 May in Sair, in Al-Khalil.

20 June 2016

- Israeli occupying forces detained 16 Palestinians from across the West Bank, including two journalists, and shot and injured two brothers with rubber-coated bullets.

21 June 2016

- Mahmoud Ra'fat Badran (age 15), from the village of Beit Ur al-Tahta in the occupied West Bank, was killed by Israeli occupying forces. His brothers, Amir (age 16) and Hadi (age 17), as well as their friends Daoud Abu Hassan (age 16) and Majd Badran (age 16), who were in the car with Mahmoud, also sustained serious injuries by Israeli gunfire and remain in serious condition.

It is without a doubt that the above-mentioned violations are in grave breach of international humanitarian law, as well as international criminal law as articulated in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. For these war crimes, we will continue to seek accountability and justice through all legal and peaceful means. At the same time, we call again upon the international community, particularly the Security Council, to act now to protect the Palestinian people and diffuse this dangerous situation, which clearly constitutes a threat to international peace and security. As we have stated in the past, the Palestinian people cannot remain the exception to the responsibility to protect civilians from atrocities and flagrant breaches of the law, as they are not just statistics but human beings whose lives are being constantly shattered. Yesterday's tragic event can only provide more evidence of the occupying Power's total disregard for the lives and rights of the Palestinian people, as well as of its total contempt for international law. The time is now for the international community to finally bring an end to Israel's impunity and to its 50-year occupation in order to bring overdue justice to the Palestinian people.

This letter is in follow-up to our 588 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 16 June 2016 (A/ES-10/724-S/2016/544) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad Mansour
Ambassador
Permanent Observer
of the State of Palestine to the United Nations

United Nations
S/2016/568

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 June 2016

Original: English

Letter dated 23 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to recall my letter dated 14 June 2016 (S/2016/569), in which I notified the Security Council of the military aggression committed by the Ethiopian government against Eritrea in the Tsorona area on the morning of 12 June 2016 and requested an urgent meeting of the Council, in accordance with Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations. Encouraged by the silence of the Council with regard to its unlawful act, the Ethiopian government is making preparations for a major military offensive and is contemplating a full-scale war of aggression against my country, Eritrea.

The publicly declared belligerent policy of Ethiopia towards Eritrea and its prevailing occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory, including the town of Badme, is a threat to regional and international peace and security in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region. It is also a violation of international law and the Charter that needs the urgent attention of the Security Council. Prevention is appropriate and cheaper than crisis management.

Once again, I would like to request an urgent meeting of the Security Council, in accordance with Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter. I also have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, that a representative of the Government of Eritrea be allowed to participate in and make statement at the meeting.

Attached are three press releases from the Eritrean Ministry of Information on the belligerent acts of Ethiopia.*

I would be most grateful if the present letter could be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Girma Asmerom Tesfay
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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* On file with Secretariat.

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United Nations

S/2016/569

Security Council

Distr.: General
14 June 2016

Original: English

Letter dated 14 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, the Ethiopian regime unleashed an unlawful and unprovoked attack against the people of Eritrea in the Tsorona area on the morning of 12 June 2016.

This belligerent act of the Ethiopian government is a threat to regional and international peace and security. Therefore, the Government of Eritrea requests an urgent meeting of the Security Council, in accordance with Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter.

I also have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, that a representative of the Government of Eritrea be allowed to participate in and make a statement at the meeting.

It must be underlined that, in violation of the Charter, its treaty obligations and international law, as well as the United Nations and Organization of African Unity/ African Union-guaranteed final and binding delimitation and demarcation decisions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission in 2002 and 2007, the Ethiopian government continues to occupy a swathe of sovereign Eritrean territory, including the town of Badme.

I would be most grateful if the present letter could be brought to the attention of the members of the Council and be circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Girma Asmerom Tesfay
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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United Nations S/2016/570

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 June 2016
English
Original: Arabic

Letter dated 23 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my previous letter dated 16 June 2016 addressed to you (S/2016/543) regarding the clearance status of shipments and containers belonging to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the permission granted by the competent Sudanese authorities to clear those shipments and containers even before all administrative requirements had been fulfilled, please find attached copies of documents showing that clearance procedures have been completed for all UNAMID shipments in Port Sudan (see annex).* It is now up to UNAMID to take delivery of its containers and transport them to their final destination.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Omer Dahab Fadl Mohamed
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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* The annex is being circulated in the language of submission only.

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Annex to the letter dated 23 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

Importer & Exporter Declarations Statment

FROM: 1/1/2016 TO: 22/6/2016

CODE: [illegible]

NAME: UNITED NATION MISSION IN DARFUR

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3229 / 1	BM	PZUS0	40116100	1,317,819.80	4000.042	2016-02-07	8680	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001404800
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3266 / 1	BM	PZUS0	84212100	2,306,534.28	4000.042	2016-03-04	8732	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001404800
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3341 / 2	IM	PZU80	40183000	8,323.30	4000.042	2016-02-04	8483	25.00	0.00	0.00	130011827800
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3341 / 4	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	7,916.60	4000.042	2016-02-04	8483	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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3395 / 1	IM	PZU80	39230000	196,773.40	4000.042	2016-02-04	8489	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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3430 / 1	IM	KHA80	[illegible]	117,740.70	4000.042	2016-01-27	7187	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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3464 / 1	IM	PZU80	73211100	286,846.00	4000.042	2016-02-05	8492	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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3688 / 1	IM	KHA80	[illegible]	4,704.00	4000.000	2016-02-02	8779	2,331.85	143.61	1,062.04	[illegible]
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3896 / 1	IM	KHA80	[illegible]	86,010.01	4000.042	2016-01-31	8126	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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4088 / 1	IM	KHA80	39281000	6.10	4000.042	2016-02-02	8785	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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4185 / 1	IM	KHA80	84484200	[illegible]	4200.041	2016-01-31	8114	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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4360 / 1	IM	KHA80	[illegible]	2,739.51	4000.000	2016-01-31	8188	1,342.95	82.16	372.83	[illegible]
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4632 / 1	IM	KHA80	40113000	1,039.60	4000.000	2016-02-04	8877	1,030.08	83.10	294.94	[illegible]
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5129 / 1	IM	KHA80	89021200	1,025,000.00	4000.048	2016-05-17	37077	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5173 / 1	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	91,272.38	4000.042	2016-02-24	13703	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5175 / 1	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	287,531.73	4000.042	2016-02-25	13691	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5177 / 1	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	287,040.71	4000.042	2016-02-24	13705	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5179 / 1	IM	PZU80	20079000	115,671.70	4000.042	2016-02-25	13672	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5181 / 1	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	199,035.71	4000.042	2016-02-25	13681	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5224 / 1	IM	KHA80	[illegible]	14,884.00	4000.000	2016-02-05	10895	7,105.00	446.82	2,112.24	[illegible]
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5237 / 1	IM	PZU80	17011200	74,993.54	4000.042	2016-02-23	13671	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5347 / 1	IM	PZU80	04081000	116,320.23	4000.042	2016-02-24	13707	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5352 / 1	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	290,166.10	4000.042	2016-02-25	13673	25.00	[illegible]	0.00	[illegible]
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5360 / 1	IM	PZU80	21061000	196,081.90	4000.042	2016-02-23	13683	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5370 / 1	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	413,476.79	4000.042	2016-02-24	13714	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5382 / 1	IM	PZU80	20081000	257,484.98	4000.042	2016-02-24	13717	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5387 / 1	IM	PZU80	[illegible]	408,173.81	4000.042	2016-02-24	13713	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5391 / 1	IM	PZU80	21069000	78,083.10	4000.042	2016-02-24	13702	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5394 / 1	IM	PZU80	21011100	146,903.40	4000.042	2016-02-24	13710	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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5336 / 1	IM	PZU80	27101280	31,160,723.1	4000.042	2016-02-24	13442	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001470100
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5534 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	163.00	4000.000	2016-03-07	18220	[redacted]	113.00	[redacted]	6.40	[redacted]	38.28	130007900000
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5549 / 1	EX	IOHA00	08033000	1,525.00	1000.000	2016-01-05	874	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130011273400
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5621 / 1	IM	PZU80	08032200	305,859.53	4000.042	2016-02-25	13876	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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5623 / 1	IM	PZU80	11010010	161,525.01	4000.042	2016-02-25	14050	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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5625 / 1	IM	PZU80	21051000	329,016.70	4000.042	2016-02-25	14056	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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5941 / 2	IM	PZU80	08080000	7,015.00	4000.042	2016-03-07	18880	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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6154 / 1	IM	PZU80	08023000	97,347.28	4000.042	2016-03-05	15891	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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6222 / 1	IM	IOHA00	04280000	131,848.02	4000.042	2016-02-22	14457	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130011280000
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6426 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	3,387.70	4000.000	2016-02-14	12280	[redacted]	1,809.82	[redacted]	101.98	[redacted]	710.45	130011273400
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6673 / 1	IM	PZU80	73083000	375,705.10	4000.042	2016-04-09	28633	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001404000
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6676 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	488.70	4000.000	2016-02-16	13012	[redacted]	260.96	[redacted]	14.00	[redacted]	98.21	130011273400
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6684 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	415.70	4000.000	2016-02-17	13163	[redacted]	221.61	[redacted]	12.26	[redacted]	86.45	130011273400
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6687 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	646.00	4000.000	2016-02-16	12891	[redacted]	336.05	[redacted]	19.20	[redacted]	136.20	130011273400
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6895 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	555.10	4000.000	2016-02-17	13082	[redacted]	282.05	[redacted]	16.06	[redacted]	116.07	130011273400
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7033 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	591.70	4000.000	2016-02-22	14365	[redacted]	309.66	[redacted]	17.75	[redacted]	123.72	130011273400
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7250 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	4,611.60	4000.000	2016-02-18	13458	[redacted]	2,243.61	[redacted]	138.34	[redacted]	984.28	130008815100
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7302 / 1	IM	IOHA00	82080000	114,666.66	4000.042	2016-02-24	14837	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130011280000
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7717 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	524.80	4000.000	2016-02-23	14791	[redacted]	277.36	[redacted]	15.73	[redacted]	109.60	130011273400
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8183 / 1	IM	PZU80	03011100	299,801.50	4000.042	2016-03-24	21616	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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8459 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	524.80	4000.000	2016-03-03	17277	[redacted]	277.36	[redacted]	15.73	[redacted]	109.60	130011273400
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8463 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	780.80	4000.000	2016-02-26	15071	[redacted]	400.62	[redacted]	23.42	[redacted]	163.26	130011273400
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8880 / 1	IM	PZU80	02071200	267,588.82	4000.042	2016-03-29	22627	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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8881 / 1	IM	PZU80	20081900	132,288.86	4000.042	2016-03-29	22626	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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8790 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	744.20	4000.000	2016-03-01	16867	[redacted]	383.02	[redacted]	22.32	[redacted]	156.61	130007846200
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9185 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	524.80	4000.000	2016-03-10	19112	[redacted]	277.36	[redacted]	15.73	[redacted]	109.60	130011273400
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9268 / 1	IM	IOHA00	08033000	664.90	4000.000	2016-03-07	18036	[redacted]	344.86	[redacted]	19.94	[redacted]	139.02	130011273400
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9275 / 1	IM	PZU80	11010010	214,117.80	4000.042	2016-03-31	22362	[redacted]	25.00	[redacted]	0.00	[redacted]	0.00	130001452300
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8279 / 1	IM	PZU00	02071200	257,548.14	4000.042	2016-03-31	23384	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001402300
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8876 / 1	IM	PZU00	20097100	246,769.89	4000.042	2016-04-04	24325	[illegible]	0.00	0.00	130001482300
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8877 / 1	IM	PZU00	02108200	941,565.00	4000.042	2016-04-02	23717	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001402300
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9280 / 1	IM	PZU00	28084100	186,822.99	4000.042	2016-04-04	24252	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001482300
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9438 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	877.10	4000.000	2016-03-07	[illegible]	363.74	20.91	141.00	130011273400
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9469 / 1	IM	PZU00	02071200	843,329.59	4000.042	2016-04-05	[illegible]	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001402300
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9657 / 1	IM	PZU00	21042000	133,080.13	4000.042	2016-04-04	24171	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001402300
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9940 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	1,691.89	4000.000	2016-03-08	18720	617.84	0.00	278.31	[illegible]
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10140 / 1	IM	KHA00	99010000	0.01	4000.000	2016-03-08	18898	25.33	0.01	0.00	[illegible]
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10324 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	498.00	4000.000	2016-03-27	22376	250.77	14.64	102.94	130011273400
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10338 / 1	IM	KHA00	39180000	613.32	4000.000	2016-03-15	20168	271.95	16.39	107.33	130011273400
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10363 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	1,140.70	4000.000	2016-03-27	22371	673.76	34.22	299.62	130011273400
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10682 / 1	IM	PZU00	39201000	1,540,195.47	4000.042	2016-04-18	27820	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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10832 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	534.60	4000.000	2016-03-17	20779	277.38	15.73	109.69	130011273400
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
10946 / 1	IM	KHA00	49112000	1,525.00	4000.000	2016-03-19	21281	1,299.05	45.75	358.85	[illegible]
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11089 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	4,172.40	4000.000	2016-03-17	21123	2,032.38	125.17	872.44	130011273400
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
11234 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	524.60	4000.000	2016-03-22	22016	277.38	15.73	109.69	130011273400
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
11729 / 1	IM	PZU00	98081000	64,280.00	4000.042	2016-05-01	40962	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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12984 / 1	IM	PZU00	27101290	18,252,252.9	4000.042	2016-05-10	33827	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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13257 / 1	IM	KHA00	87089000	163,101.94	4000.042	2016-03-30	24779	25.00	0.00	0.00	[illegible]
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19762 / 1	IM	KHA00	88033000	323.32	4000.000	2016-05-12	36571	183.75	9.69	67.50	130007979100
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34016 / 1	BM	PZU00	04100000	81,471.00	4000.042	2016-02-28	14767	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001463300
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36708 / 1	BM	PZU00	20151100	106,990.83	4000.042	2016-01-06	690	25.00	0.00	0.00	130001223300
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30006 / 1	BM	IOHA00	00033000	1,800.00	4000.042	2016-01-05	505	25.00	0.00	0.00	130014722100
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59082 / 1	BM	IOHA00	00033000	824.00	4000.000	2016-01-05	644	277.35	16.73	100.00	130011273400
[redacted]											

United Nations S/2016/571

Security Council

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Identical letters dated 23 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the twenty-eighth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/546).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the positions that it has previously communicated in its identical letters addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council responding to the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015). It would also like to stress the following points:

1. The Syrian Government deplores the fact that, even though we are now entering the sixth year of the Syrian crisis, the authors of the report continue to turn a blind eye to the principal cause of the crisis in Syria, which is the terrorism that continues to receive the support of the Governments of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, France, the United Kingdom and others. Those States are providing money, weapons, ammunition, materiel, terrorist fighters and mercenaries to armed terrorist groups in Syria, notably the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Nusrah Front organizations. Such support, whether direct or indirect, covert or overt, is in blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Wilfully ignoring and evading that fact will not help to alleviate the suffering of Syrians.

2. The Syrian Government reminds the Secretariat that Syrians, when they flee from the terrorism, tyranny, and crimes of the armed terrorist groups, take refuge in areas protected by the Syrian Arab Army. They seek safety and security within the embrace of the State. There have been many vivid examples of this. When hundreds of thousands of civilians were displaced from Idlib and Raqqah, they fled to Tartus, Ladhiqiyah, Hama, Homs, Damascus and Rif Dimashq governorates. When civilians were forced to leave Yarmouk camp after it was overrun in April 2015 by the terrorist ISIL organization with the complicity and assistance of the Nusrah Front and other terrorist organizations, they fled to Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham.

3. The report should have addressed the violations of international law and blatant interference by the Governments of Western and Arab States and of States of

the region in the internal affairs of the Syrian State by spreading extremism in the region and using terrorism as an instrument to achieve narrow political gains. It also should have addressed the unilateral and coercive economic, commercial and financial measures imposed by the European Union and the United States against the Syrian people and its economy, which have exacerbated the humanitarian situation of those Syrians who have borne the brunt of the crisis, particularly those in vulnerable groups.

4. The Syrian Government stresses that the report's evasion and wilful ignorance of the facts will not make them go away. That is the hard reality. The United Nations must not forget that successes in the delivery of medical and other humanitarian assistance by the United Nations or other parties to beneficiaries in both stable and unstable areas during the past months and years, most recently in May 2016 (as detailed in paragraphs 36, 39 and 40), would not have taken place without the assistance and facilities provided to the United Nations and its specialized agencies and to international organizations by the Syrian Government. Attempts to minimize such successes by pointing out cases where delivery of assistance was incomplete or conditional are ludicrous. The Syrian Government deplores the Secretariat's continued insistence on omitting any reference to its efforts so as to downplay the Syrian Government's role in providing help to its people without discrimination.

5. The Syrian Government rejects attempts by the Secretariat to burnish the image of armed terrorist groups by calling them "non-State armed opposition groups" (paragraphs 17, 19 and 62). We wonder what the Secretariat's legal basis is for calling the terrorist Nusrah Front, which is the backbone of the so-called Army of Conquest, part of the "non-State armed opposition" (paragraph 17). Also, how can the Secretariat classify the terrorist Ahrar al-Sham movement, which works openly with the terrorist Nusrah Front, as the "armed opposition" (paragraph 19)? Certain States even classify it as the "moderate armed opposition". We call upon the Secretariat to inform the Syrian Government and the Member States of the United Nations of the legal basis for this strange classification.

6. The Syrian Government rejects the authors' characterization of the information provided by the Syrian Government on the numbers of victims of terrorist attacks in May as allegations, and rejects the statement that such victims "had allegedly been killed" (paragraph 6). The information provided by the Syrian Government to the United Nations has been officially documented and is verifiable, unlike the information received by the Secretariat from organizations and individuals who claim to be credible and honest but are in fact mercenaries who are misleading the United Nations while carrying out the orders and agendas of their employers and backers. The Syrian Government reiterates that it rejects the claims made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as it relies on allegations and unreliable sources and relays its reports from Beirut, far from where the events are taking place, through parties friendly to the terrorist organizations. The Syrian Government calls upon the Secretariat to change this unprofessional approach, which serves not the truth but rather the prejudices of certain influential States on the Security Council by demonizing the efforts of the Syrian Government and its allies to combat terrorism.

7. The Syrian Government reiterates its rejection of attempts by the Secretariat to draw an equivalence between counter-terrorism activities and the

terrorist acts perpetrated by such terrorist organizations as ISIL, the Nusrah Front and the armed groups affiliated with them and with Al-Qaida, including the terrorist groups that rain down mortar shells, rockets and "hellfire" cannon shells on Aleppo daily, as well as the groups that committed the massacre in Zarah in Hama governorate in April and claimed responsibility for the terrorist bombings in the cities of Jablah and Tartus on 23 May 2016 and the suicide attack in the Sayyidah Zaynab area in June. Those attacks were perpetrated by terrorist groups such as Ahrar al-Sham, the Army of Conquest, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade, Northern Shield and others.

8. The Government finds odd the report's excessively bleak characterization of medical assistance to victims in various Syrian regions and cities. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other organizations managed to deliver medical assistance to some 1.5 million beneficiaries in May (paragraphs 36 and 42). We reiterate yet again that WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other organizations would not have been able to provide medical assistance to such a large number of beneficiaries without the facilities, cooperation and coordination of the Syrian Government. The Syrian Government yet again asks the United Nations to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of any problems in the delivery of such assistance so that they can be addressed. It also reiterates its principled rejection of efforts to deliver medical assistance to armed terrorist groups, as it does not want terrorists to continue killing Syrian civilians.

9. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic rejects the Secretariat's inclusion in the report of incorrect, out-of-date and contradictory information on the official Syrian response to WHO requests to deliver medical assistance to several areas. The Syrian Government stresses that information provided about these requests must not be misleading. From the beginning of 2016 to date, the Syrian Government has approved 11 WHO requests, not six. In certain cases, the Syrian Government informed WHO that it would not be possible to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers. Even after obtaining the requisite approvals, United Nations agencies have been unable to access many areas because of terrorist threats.

10. The Syrian Government is surprised that the authors did not convey the entire picture concerning the armed terrorist groups based in the city of Khan Shaykhun in Idlib governorate that prevented Idlib health department medical staff at gunpoint from vaccinating children. Those terrorist groups then went ahead and vaccinated children in the Khan Shaykhun area themselves, poisoning a number of children who then had to be taken to Ma'arrah hospital in May. The same thing happened with a 2014 vaccination campaign carried out by persons affiliated with the so-called opposition coalition in Idlib, which claimed the lives of 17 children and poisoned dozens with spoiled vaccines that had been smuggled across the border in coordination with the Turkish regime and non-governmental organizations that betrayed their humanitarian ideals.

11. The Syrian Government reiterates its condemnation of the partiality shown by the Secretariat towards the Turkish Government at the expense of the hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilians in Hasakah governorate who are suffering as a result of the Turkish Government's deliberate closure of the Nusaybin border crossing and refusal to approve United Nations requests to bring humanitarian assistance into Hasakah governorate through that crossing. The Government of the

Syrian Arab Republic once again asserts that it is not the case that the border crossing has been closed temporarily for security reasons since December 2015 (paragraph 47), but rather for well-known political reasons. The Syrian Government is astonished by the double standards demonstrated by the United Nations, certain Security Council members and all those responsible for the humanitarian work of the International Syria Support Group, who have failed to pressure the Turkish Government to permit the immediate delivery of assistance to Hasakah governorate through the Nusaybin crossing. We remind you that the Turkish Government, with the knowledge of the members of the Security Council, has continued to allow the use of the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salamah crossings even though armed terrorist groups are deployed on both sides. The Turkish authorities use these and other crossings for smuggling weapons and terrorists into Syria on the pretext that they are delivering humanitarian and medical assistance on behalf of organizations claiming humanitarian and charitable status, such as the Turkish regime's Humanitarian Relief Foundation, as Turkish newspapers reported on 14 June 2016. That organization does not deliver humanitarian assistance, as the Erdoğan regime claims, but rather arms for terrorist groups.

12. The Syrian Government notes that as of 21 June 2016, there had been 221 applications for entry visas from United Nations organizations and specialized agencies. Of these, 196 had been granted and only 16 visa requests were still being processed. As of 21 June 2016, the United Nations and its specialized agencies had submitted 437 residence visa applications. Of those, 414 had been approved and 22 were being processed.

13. The Syrian Government reiterates its position that cross-border assistance is futile, and condemns once more the Secretariat's insistence on covering up the fact that assistance continues to fall into the hands of known armed terrorist groups. The notifications sent to the Syrian Government do not meet the minimum standard of credibility in terms of figures, information, numbers of beneficiaries and particulars on which parties collect and distribute the aid. The Syrian Government also rejects the Secretariat's attempts to inflate the number of aid beneficiaries into the millions in areas where the population, including children, is merely in the thousands, and reiterates that the United Nations monitoring mechanism cannot verify that cross-border assistance is reaching its rightful beneficiaries. We remind you that the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salamah and Ramtha crossings are entry points for arms, materiel and ammunition being smuggled to armed terrorist groups in Syria. For example, on 19 and 20 April 2016, large quantities of ammunition entered Syria from Jordan inside refrigerators belonging to the Jordanian Red Crescent. The Syrian Government calls on the United Nations to condemn the exploitation of the cross-border activities of humanitarian organizations to support terrorist organizations operating in Syria and to transfer weapons, not humanitarian assistance, to Syria. It also calls for an investigation into what happens to assistance when it crosses the border and falls into the hands of armed terrorist groups.

14. The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the Secretariat should distort the facts about what happened on 12 May 2016 concerning the agreed-upon delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Darayya area (paragraph 57). The particulars of that incident are explained in the Syrian Government's response to the twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/477).

15. The Syrian Government reiterates its rejection of the Secretariat's attempts to equivocate regarding the so-called besieged areas in several paragraphs of the report, including paragraphs 51 and 60, notably by inflating or downplaying the numbers of inhabitants in such areas as Darayya, Duma, Harasta, Sharqiyah, Zamalka, Irbin and Qadsiya in Rif Dimashq governorate. The Syrian Government deplores the Secretariat's reference to the so-called siege of Yarmouk, when the Secretariat knows that the camp was besieged from inside by the terrorist ISIL and Nusrah Front organizations and that the majority of the camp's inhabitants were able to reach the nearby town of Yalda and receive the assistance earmarked for them. The Syrian Government also rejects the Secretariat's description of certain areas, such as Duma and Darayya, as "besieged" when enormous amounts of arms, materiel and funds still find their way there. Those areas are hubs for armed terrorist groups such as ISIL and the Army of Islam. The Syrian Government is surprised that the report fails to mention the reason for the suspension by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) of assistance to the people of Yarmouk camp through Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham, which is that armed groups there issued a statement announcing that they were the only ones authorized to oversee the distribution of assistance and to receive aid convoys entering Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham.

16. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to prevail on those States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to refrain from doing so, in implementation of the Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism and the financing thereof, particularly resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015). Compliance with and enforcement of those resolutions is the key to resolving the situation in Syria and ensuring unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need in Syria.

17. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its long-standing position that the crisis in Syria requires a political solution based on dialogue among Syrians under Syrian leadership and without preconditions or foreign interference. It further stresses that the political approach goes hand in hand with counter-terrorism efforts, which will continue until all of the armed terrorist groups active in Syria have been eradicated. It furthermore reminds the Secretariat that the success of the political approach and any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation will depend, above all, on creating a climate conducive to a serious international and regional commitment to fighting terrorism that is non-politicized and free of double standards, as well as on an immediate end to the unilateral coercive economic measures being imposed on the Syrian people with no legal or moral basis and in clear violation of humanitarian law.

18. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I to the identical letters dated 23 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Crimes committed by ISIL, the Nusrah Front, the Free Army, the Army of Islam, Ahrar al-Sham, the Army of Conquest and other armed terrorist groups ignored by the authors of the report

- In the period 22 April to 21 May 2016, terrorists killed 174 civilians, including 39 children, and injured 857 civilians, including 161 children, across the governorates of Syria, not including Raqqah and Idlib.
- On 1 May, in the city of Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Rashidin, Old City, Salah al-Din and Sha‘ar neighbourhoods opened fired and launched mortar shells and gas cylinders at the Jam‘iyat al-Zahra', Halab al-Jadidah, Aziziyah, Hamdaniyah and Arqub neighbourhoods, killing three civilians and injuring seven others. Material damage was caused.
- On 1 May, in Dayr al-Zawr, armed terrorist groups belonging to the ISIL organization launched 13 mortar shells at the Qusur and Thawrah neighbourhoods, killing two civilians and injuring seven others.
- On 1 and 2 May, in Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Rashidin, Mashhad, Old City, Bustan al-Basha, Bustan al-Qasr, Rashidin al-Rabi‘ah, Salah al-Din and Sha‘ar neighbourhoods opened fire and launched mortar shells and gas cylinder missiles at the Shahba', Ansari, Sulaymaniyah, Sayyid Ali, Talal, Nile Street, Aziziyah, Maydan, Jamiliyah, Maysalun, Bab al-Faraj, Hamdaniyah and Arqub neighbourhoods, killing five civilians and injuring 63 others with shrapnel. Material damage was caused.
- On 3 and 4 May, in Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Bustan al-Qasr, Bani Zayd, Rashidin, Bustan al-Basha, Rashidin al-Rabi‘ah, Salah al-Din and Old City neighbourhoods fired sniper rounds, opened fire and launched mortar shells and gas cylinders at the Bustan al-Zahrah, Nile Street, Suryan al-Qadimah, Jamiliyah, Jam‘iyat al-Zahra', Old City, Muhafazah, Shahba', Idha‘ah, Mushariqah, Minyan, Maydan, Salah al-Din, Sayf al-Dawlah, Hamdaniyah, A‘zamiyah, Bab al-Faraj, Sulaymaniyah and Khalidiyah neighbourhoods, killing 21 civilians and injuring 93 others. Extensive material damage was caused. Armed terrorist groups belonging to the ISIL terrorist organization located in the towns of Adnan and Biyanun also fired three locally made missiles at the towns of Nubul and Zahra', injuring three civilians and causing material damage.

- On 7 and 8 May, in Dayr al-Zawr, armed terrorist groups belonging to the ISIL organization launched 22 mortar shells at the Qusur, Thawrah and Tahtuh neighbourhoods, injuring eight civilians with shrapnel, including three women, and causing material damage.

- On 8 and 9 May, in Homs, armed terrorist groups belonging to the ISIL terrorist organization fired missiles at the Muhr gas collection station north of the Hajjar checkpoint on the Homs-Tadmur (Palmyra) highway, causing a fire. They also attacked the gas pipeline leading to the aforementioned station with a car bomb at Bi'r Tallat al-Muhr.

- On 8 and 9 May, in the city of Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Old City and Bustan al-Basha neighbourhoods fired sniper rounds, opened fire and launched mortar shells and gas cylinders at the Jamiliyah, Maydan, and Sulayman al-Halabi neighbourhoods, killing five civilians and injuring two others. Material damage was caused.

- On 8 and 9 May, in Dayr al-Zawr, armed terrorist groups belonging to the ISIL organization launched 22 mortar shells at the Qusur, Thawrah and Tahtuh neighbourhoods, killing four people and injuring six others. Material damage was caused to some buildings, shops and automobiles.

- On 9 and 10 May, in the city of Dayr al-Zawr, armed terrorist groups belonging to the ISIL organization launched 16 mortar shells at the Harabish and Huwayqah neighbourhoods, injuring eight civilians with shrapnel, including two women and three children, and causing material damage.

- From 12 to 16 May, in the city of Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Ansari, Khan Tuman, Amiriyah, Layramun, Karm al-Tirab, Rashidin al-Rabi'ah, the Old City, Amiriyah and Bustan al-Qasr fired sniper rounds and launched mortar shells at the Sayf al-Dawlah al-Hamdani, Khan Tuman, Ramusah, western Shaykh Maqsud, Afrin, Suq al-Intaj, Hamdaniyah, Sayf al-Dawlah, Salah al-Din, Shahba' (near the media centre) and Fayd neighbourhoods, killing four civilians and injuring 24 others.

- On 16, 17 and 21 May, in the city of Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Rashidin, Bustan al-Basha and Bani Zayd neighbourhoods fired sniper rounds and launched mortar shells at the Halab al-Jadidah, the Old City, Muhafazah, Aziziyah and Hamdaniyah neighbourhoods, killing a child and a woman and injuring 24 other civilians, including women and children.

- On 20 and 21 May, in the city of Dar'a, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Nusrah Front launched "elephant" rockets and artillery shells at the city of Dar'a, injuring seven civilians and causing material damage.

- On 23 and 24 May, in the city of Tartus, a terrorist blew himself up with a car bomb at the new departure terminal. Then three other suicide bombers blew themselves up with explosive vests at the main and southern gates and across from the west side of the garage. Some 40 civilians were killed and 81 others injured, and extensive material damage was caused in the area.

- On 23 and 24 May, in Ladhiqiyah, a car exploded at the new Jablah departure terminal. Then two suicide bombers blew themselves up in front of the entrance to the Jablah electricity department and the Tadamun-Fawwar junction. Then another suicide bomber blew himself up at the Jablah National Hospital. Some 125 civilians were killed and others were injured. Extensive material damage was caused and the hospital was taken out of service.
- On 23 and 24 May, in Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in Bustan al-Qasr, Bustan al-Basha and Bani Zayd neighbourhoods launched mortar shells at the Zahra', Maydan, Shaykhan, Jamiliyah, Ashrafiyah and Sabil Street neighbourhoods, killing six civilians, including three women, and injuring 17 others with shrapnel, including women and children. Armed terrorist groups in the towns of Adnan and Biyanun also launched more than 20 rockets at the towns of Nubul and Zahra' killing some civilians and injuring three others with shrapnel.
- On 27 and 28 May, in the city of Hama, the armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Confederation of Glory in the village of Zaka launched six rockets at the thermal power station in the city of Muhradah, injuring two workers and setting fire to a fuel tank. Material damage was caused to the fuel and cooling pumps.
- From 27 to 29 May, in the city of Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Bustan al-Basha, Bani Zayd and Old City neighbourhoods launched mortar shells and gas cylinders at the Maydan, Ashrafiyah, Bab al-Faraj, Jam'iyat al-Zahra', Layramun, Sulaymaniyah and Minyan neighbourhoods, killing two civilians and injuring 25 others.
- On 30 and 31 May, in Rif Dimashq, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Army of Islam, the Rahman Corps and the Nusrah Front located in the town of Arbin launched mortar shells at the Traffic and Emergency Services Auxiliary complex, the Technical Services Directorate building, the Sakal Company, the Medical Services School and the Assad suburb in Harasta, killing two civilians and injuring a woman and child. Material damage was caused.

Annex II to the identical letters dated 23 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Examples of humanitarian assistance that was delivered during May 2016 thanks to the facilitation provided by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and other international organizations, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Also listed is assistance delivered by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid and medical assistance), provided from inside Syrian territory by United Nations agencies, to various governorates, including Rif Dimashq, Aleppo, Qunaytirah, Hasakah, Homs, Hama and Dar'a. Some 2,188,840 Syrian beneficiaries (437,768 families) received food parcels provided by the World Food Programme through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Some 495,915 beneficiaries (99,183 families) received food parcels provided by the United Nations through non-governmental organizations. The total number of the beneficiaries of United Nations assistance distributed from inside Syrian territory thus stands at 2,684,755 (536,951 families). The above-mentioned assistance was distributed to the governorates by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent as follows: 72,552 parcels in Rif Dimashq; 19,620 parcels in Dar'a and its countryside; 62,000 parcels in Aleppo and its countryside; 150 parcels in Hasakah; 41,542 parcels in Hama and its countryside; 64,316 parcels in Homs and its countryside; 19,945 parcels in Dayr al-Zawr; 5885 parcels in Suwayda'; 59,141 parcels in Damascus; 56,856 parcels in Ladhiqiyah; 11,765 parcels in Qunaytirah; and 23,996 parcels in Tartus.
- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from inside Syrian territory to most of the governorates, including Rif Dimashq, Qunaytirah, Dar'a, Aleppo, Hama and Homs. A total of 80,695 food parcels were delivered, in addition to 57,987 canned food parcels and food aid for community kitchens for hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries. An additional 57,734 parcels provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were distributed in Homs, Aleppo, Damascus and Rif Dimashq governorates.
- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid, medical assistance, water purifiers, wheelchairs and baby food) provided by United Nations agencies, ICRC and eight foreign non-governmental organizations in Syria to hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries in Aleppo, Hasakah, Rif Dimashq, Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Damascus, Homs, Hama, Suwayda', Tartus and Ladhiqiyah governorates.
- From 2014 through the end of May 2016, a total of 139,382 food parcels and 42,580 medical parcels have been delivered to the inhabitants of the camp by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. That is in addition to the ongoing operation to provide non-food

aid, other foodstuffs, medical care and dental care. We also note that the Palestine refugees in Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham are inhabitants of Yarmouk camp who were displaced from the camp after the terrorist organization ISIL overran it in April 2015 in collusion with the terrorist Nusrah Front and other terrorist groups present inside the camp.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Reporting period from 26 February to 24 June 2016

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my previous report of 26 February 2016 (S/2016/189).

2. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and along the Blue Line was generally calm, after the incidents that had occurred during the previous reporting period. The situation has remained relatively stable, despite provocative rhetoric that presents a risk to stability across the Blue Line. In their engagement with the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and UNIFIL, the Lebanese and Israeli authorities continued to affirm their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and displayed resolve to safeguard the cessation of hostilities. By closely engaging with UNIFIL through the established liaison and coordination mechanism, the parties defused localized friction and continued to pursue practical localized arrangements along the Blue Line. Progress remained limited, however, on their outstanding obligations under the resolution and there was no progress towards a permanent ceasefire. Nearly 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), the current calm in southern Lebanon should not be confused with progress on its key objectives. This will require continued international attention, as well as proactive efforts by both parties.

3. I emphasized those key points during my visit to Lebanon with the Presidents of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, on 24 and 25 March. During the visit, we met with the Lebanese leadership, youth, women, and Syrian and Palestine refugees. We visited Tripoli and the Biqa', as well as UNIFIL. The joint visit underscored our commitment to peace and security, domestic stability and socioeconomic stabilization in the whole of Lebanon. It acknowledged the great debt owed to the Lebanese people for their generosity in hosting refugees until they return to their home country. Our consultations and visits of vulnerable families highlighted the continued need for humanitarian and development assistance to underserved Lebanese host communities and to Syrian and Palestine refugees, and for strong international support for Lebanon's State institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces.

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4. While the situation in the country was generally calm, the security situation remained fragile and vulnerable, in particular to terrorist attacks. On 12 June, a car bomb was detonated in front of a domestic financial institution in central Beirut. There has been no immediate claim of responsibility. The incident occurred in the context of domestic debate over recent measures of compliance implemented by Lebanese banks. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the security forces continued to prevent any re-occurrence of the major terrorist attack carried out by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the previous reporting period and arrested a number of suspects with links to ISIL and other militant groups. Nonetheless, the situation in the border areas remained unstable owing to the continued presence of militants, including of ISIL and the Nusrah Front.

5. On 15 April, the Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, reaffirmed before the Organization of Islamic Cooperation the commitment of Lebanon to its policy of disassociation, pursuant to the Baabda Declaration and the Government's ministerial statement, and consistent with his statement on behalf of the cabinet following its extraordinary session of 22 February. This followed the suspension of the support package from Saudi Arabia to the Lebanese Armed Forces and measures by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council against Hizbullah.

6. From 8 to 29 May, municipal elections were held as scheduled in four rounds across the country. These elections, the first since 2010, were carried out in a predominantly peaceful and positive atmosphere, without any major security incidents. Mr. Salam continued his efforts to lead the Government and the cabinet met during the reporting period and passed a limited number of decrees. On 14 June, the Kata'ib party announced the resignation of two of its ministers from Government in protest over the Cabinet's internal decision-making mechanism. This follows the resignation announced by the Minister of Justice, Ashraf Rifi, on 21 February, in protest over what he called Hizbullah's domination over the Cabinet. Despite the ongoing parliamentary dialogue sessions chaired by the Speaker, Nabih Berri, and continued dialogue between the Future Movement and Hizbullah, there was no progress on electing a president, a position which has now been vacant for more than two years. On 2 June, a fortieth parliamentary session to elect a president was inquorate owing to the ongoing boycott of the Free Patriotic Movement and Hizbullah. Civil society activists demanding better governance and an improved delivery of services continued to hold regular, limited protests during the reporting period.

7. The number of Syrian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon remained stable during the reporting period, owing to the policy put in place by the Government in 2015 to restrict access to humanitarian cases. As at 20 May, 1,048,275 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR, including 47,138 in the UNIFIL area of operations.

8. Tensions and protests continued early in the reporting period in the Palestine refugee camps, over adjustments to the hospitalization policy of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). These were calmed by the initiation of talks to resolve the disagreements between the Palestinian factions and UNRWA. The ongoing dialogue led to an easing of blockages of and sit-ins in UNRWA installations. In the Ein El Hilweh camp, there were serious clashes between extremist militants and Fatah that led to a number of fatalities.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

9. UNIFIL completed and shared with both parties the reports of the investigation into the rocket firing that occurred on 20 December 2015 and the improvised explosive device attack that occurred on 4 January 2016. The UNIFIL investigation into the incident of 20 December confirmed that three rockets of 122 mm calibre had been fired by means of battery-activation from improvised ramps located in the vicinity of Hinniyah (Sector West). One rocket had landed in a plantation close to Nahariya in Israel, while a second had reportedly landed in the sea off the coast of Israel. The third impact site could not be located. The Israel Defense Forces retaliated with at least seven mortar rounds of 120 mm calibre, which fell in the vicinity of Zibqin (Sector West). No injuries were reported and no one claimed responsibility for the rocket launching. Based on information provided by the Israel Defense Forces on the attack of 4 January, UNIFIL concluded that three improvised explosive devices had been detonated in an area more than one kilometre south of the Blue Line, in the Shab'a Farms area, hitting two Israel Defense Forces vehicles, each driven by one soldier, who had reportedly been treated for shock. Hizbullah had claimed responsibility for the attack. In response, the Israel Defense Forces had fired a total of 122 artillery shells of 155 mm calibre, some containing high explosive and phosphorous, of which 82 landed north of the Blue Line in the areas of Arab al-Wazzani, Bastrah, Majidiyah and Mari (Sector East), without causing significant damage but posing a high risk for the local population and UNIFIL personnel.

10. On 15 March, east of United Nations position 9-63, near Udaysah (Sector East), the Israel Defense Forces removed pieces of concrete pipe from a track leading to the Israeli technical fence, south of the Blue Line. Subsequently, Lebanese municipal workers violated the Blue Line when creating a sand barrier in the same location. During the works, Israel Defense Forces soldiers located south of the technical fence pointed weapons at the Lebanese workers. UNIFIL monitored the situation throughout the incident to prevent an escalation. The following day, Lebanese civilians and Lebanese Armed Forces personnel returned to the area and violated the Blue Line. On 21 March, the Israel Defense Forces built a section of prefabricated wall in the area south of the Israeli technical fence. UNIFIL continues to liaise with the parties to ensure calm in that area of the Blue Line, where tensions have arisen in the past.

11. Other ground violations of the Blue Line were carried out mainly by shepherds and their flocks in the Shab'a Farms and Bastrah (Sector East) and by farmers cultivating their fields in Blida (Sector East) and Rumaysh (Sector West). Following previously observed and reported seasonal patterns and despite repeated warnings by UNIFIL personnel, violations by shepherds and farmers increased with the onset of spring. Furthermore, on six occasions in April, UNIFIL observed groups of 4 to 10 men in civilian clothes walking in areas close to the Blue Line in the vicinity of Hula and Mays al-Jabal (Sector East) and violating it briefly in each instance. The men carried cameras, and once UNIFIL observed a stone being thrown at the Israeli technical fence. At times, individuals approached the Blue Line using the lanes opened by UNIFIL through minefields leading to Blue Line markers. On several

occasions, Israel Defense Forces soldiers monitored the activity. UNIFIL urged the Lebanese Armed Forces to act to ensure respect of the Blue Line. On 2 June, one Israel Defense Forces soldier crossed briefly into territory north of the Blue Line. Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers in a nearby position fired five warning shots in the air and the Israel Defense Forces soldier returned south of the Blue Line. Later on the same day, eight Israel Defense Forces soldiers briefly crossed the Blue Line in the Bastrah area (Sector East).

12. UNIFIL continued to observe civilians carrying unauthorized weapons in the area of operations, albeit in significantly fewer instances than during the previous reporting period. Most incidents involved civilians carrying hunting weapons in the areas of Mays al-Jabal and Blida (Sector East) as well as Marun al-Ra's (Sector West). On one occasion, two armed hunters crossed south of the Blue Line, in the vicinity of Mays al-Jabal. There were also several instances where UNIFIL observed the presence or firing of small arms, including during weddings and funerals and on the evening of 22 May, following the conclusion of the municipal elections in southern Lebanon. In all cases, UNIFIL informed the Lebanese Armed Forces of the violations.

13. The Israel Defense Forces continued to assert that Hizbullah maintains military infrastructure and equipment in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL monitors the area of operations and the Blue Line and reports all violations of resolution 1701 (2006) that it observes, including the presence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons. In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL does not proactively search private property for weapons in the south, unless there is credible evidence of a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an imminent threat of hostile activity from that location. Where specific information is received regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel, weapons or infrastructure inside its area of operations, UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, remains determined to act with all means available within its mandate and capabilities. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces command continued to confirm that it would act immediately to put a stop to any illegal activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) and relevant Government decisions.

14. Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continued almost daily, mostly with unmanned aerial vehicles, but also with fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty. UNIFIL protested to the Israel Defense Forces about overflights and called upon the Government of Israel to stop them immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested against the air violations to UNIFIL.

15. Israel has continued to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. To date, Israel has not responded to the proposal submitted by UNIFIL to both parties in 2011 concerning security arrangements aimed at facilitating the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the area. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL in July 2011 of their agreement to the proposal.

16. UNIFIL generally continued to enjoy full freedom of movement throughout the area of operations. In a few isolated incidents in Sector West, UNIFIL troops encountered unfriendly behaviour and their movement was obstructed. On 7 April, a group of eight persons in civilian clothes stopped a UNIFIL patrol in the vicinity of

Sribbin and accused the peacekeepers of taking photographs. A handheld radio and a camera were taken from the patrol. UNIFIL protested to the Lebanese Armed Forces about the incident. To date, the items have not been returned. On 7 May, a UNIFIL patrol was stopped in the vicinity of Batuliyah and asked to leave the location. An alternate route was blocked with three cars, which were removed after the intervention of a civilian. Upon leaving the area, the patrol was stopped once more by a man in a vehicle carrying an assault rifle, who then followed the patrol for approximately one kilometre. UNIFIL engaged with the Lebanese Armed Forces and community leaders about each incident to prevent their reoccurrence.

17. The relations between UNIFIL and the local population remained largely positive. The UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander maintained close relations with local authorities, religious leaders and a wide range of community representatives. UNIFIL civilian and military personnel regularly engaged with municipal and civil society representatives on a variety of issues. UNIFIL undertook outreach initiatives aimed at capacity development and at raising awareness among the local population of its mandate and activities, including on International Women's Day, World Water Day and Mine Awareness Day.

18. UNIFIL continued to implement quick-impact projects to support the extension of State authority in the area of operations and address the needs of the local population. Projects focused on improving access to basic services, including water supply, health and education, as well as capacity-building to promote economic and social empowerment of the local communities. UNIFIL carried out joint trainings with civil defence and municipal police personnel, in support for government efforts, to enhance capacity. UNIFIL contingents provided medical, dental and veterinary assistance to the local population.

19. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained their level of deployment at two brigades in the area south of the Litani River. They constructed eight watchtowers along the Blue Line in Sector West and intermittent observation duty at the watchtowers has commenced. In the light of the tense security situation along the eastern border with the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lebanese Armed Forces maintained a reinforced presence in the north-eastern part of the UNIFIL area of operations (Shab'a village and the Arkub area). For the municipal elections in southern Lebanon on 22 May, the Lebanese authorities significantly strengthened the deployment of security forces in the area of operations to ensure a safe and secure environment during and immediately after the voting. The elections were carried out without significant security incidents.

20. UNIFIL conducted an average of 13,650 operational activities monthly throughout the area of operations, including patrols, checkpoints and observation tasks. The number of operational activities carried out by UNIFIL in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces remained largely the same as in the previous period. UNIFIL took advantage of the generally calm situation in the area of operations to expand foot patrols in villages and urban areas, enhancing contact between peacekeepers and the local population.

21. In accordance with its mandate, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, which comprises four corvettes, one offshore patrol vessel and two fast patrol boats, carried out maritime interdiction activities and provided training for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy. During the reporting period, the Maritime Task Force hailed 1,839 ships and the Lebanese authorities inspected 442 vessels. All the ships thus

inspected were declared clear. UNIFIL continued to carry out joint exercises and training with the Lebanese Armed Forces, including their Navy, to enhance capabilities and operational effectiveness.

22. The Maritime Task Force maintained a visible presence in the southern part of the area of maritime operations to prevent tensions between Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL does not have a mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which was installed unilaterally by Israel and which is not recognized by the Government of Lebanon or the United Nations. The Israel Defense Forces continued to carry out frequent maintenance activities at the buoys. On several occasions, Israel Defense Forces patrol boats positioned south of the line of buoys fired machine gun rounds and flares in a westerly direction.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

23. During the period under review, the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander maintained regular contact with Lebanese and Israeli authorities, focusing on the situation in the area of operations and operational and security issues related to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL worked closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces through the established liaison and coordination arrangements to defuse sources of tension and prevent incidents along the Blue Line and in the area of operations. In the tripartite forum and in bilateral meetings with UNIFIL, the parties consistently conveyed that they did not have offensive intentions and that they fully respected the integrity of the Blue Line.

24. Nevertheless, tension occasionally mounted in the vicinity of the Blue Line as a result of violations or actions by either side, which were interpreted as provocative by the other. UNIFIL engaged with the parties to de-escalate localized incidents as they arose and to assist in reducing the scope for friction. UNIFIL also encouraged the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces to use more proactively the established liaison mechanism to share information on planned activities and deployments, in particular in sensitive areas along the Blue Line.

25. UNIFIL remained closely engaged with the parties to prevent tension from rising and offered its assistance to remove the sand barrier deposited by Lebanese municipal workers south of the Blue Line in the sensitive location near Udaysah (Sector East). UNIFIL also engaged with the parties, with a view to preventing incidents resulting from the presence of Lebanese men in civilian attire in the vicinity of the Blue Line, who at times violated the Blue Line and used the lanes opened by UNIFIL through minefields leading to Blue Line markers.

26. Capitalizing on the prevailing calm, UNIFIL continued to assist the parties in developing mutually agreeable security arrangements and confidence-building measures that would reinforce the cessation of hostilities and facilitate respect for the Blue Line. UNIFIL conducted bilateral consultations in Lebanon and Israel to seek to renew arrangements for the upcoming harvesting by Lebanese farmers of olive fields in Blida, which extend south of the Blue Line. UNIFIL increased its monitoring in the vicinity of the Wazzani River and maintained close coordination with the parties to prevent violations of the Blue Line in that area, particularly given the increased number of visitors to the area during the summer months.

27. During the reporting period, the parties worked with UNIFIL to avoid tension or misunderstandings when undertaking routine maintenance activities in sensitive areas close to the Blue Line, such as vegetation and mud clearance and maintenance of the Ghajar water pumps.

28. Palestinian Commemorations of Land Day on 30 March, Al-Nakba on 15 May and Al-Naksa on 5 June were conducted peacefully in the area of operations. UNIFIL liaised with both parties in advance to assist in preventing incidents on those occasions. In close coordination with UNIFIL, the Lebanese Armed Forces effectively exercised control of access and ensured that public gatherings near the Blue Line did not give rise to incidents.

29. Since my previous report, UNIFIL has continued to facilitate the tripartite forum, which addresses recurring violations of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including ground violations, Israeli air violations, the continued occupation of northern Ghajar, as well as allegations by the Israel Defense Forces of Hizbullah's presence and activities near the Blue Line. The parties also discussed the regional threats faced by both countries and their continued interest in maintaining calm and stability along the Blue Line. The meetings highlighted the importance of using the tripartite forum and other liaison and coordination channels with UNIFIL to prevent tactical issues from causing unintended escalation and to clarify the parties' respective positions and concerns.

30. There continues to be no progress towards the establishment of a UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv.

31. UNIFIL continued its efforts with the parties to mark the Blue Line visibly on the ground, as a confidence-building measure, as well as to assist with the monitoring of violations and prevent inadvertent crossings. The parties conducted separate field visits with UNIFIL to measure new points and validate markers constructed by UNIFIL. The marking process is supported by UNIFIL demining teams that clear access lanes through minefields. During the period, UNIFIL constructed 12 additional markers, bringing the total to date to 249 Blue Line markers, of which 237 have been verified by the parties, thereby confirming acceptance of their placement on the ground. UNIFIL, in close coordination with the parties, also continued to refurbish markers to ensure that they are intact and can fulfil their function.

32. UNIFIL continued to support the Lebanese Armed Forces through the implementation of the strategic dialogue plan and the promotion of military assistance by international donors to the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. During the reporting period, UNIFIL convened a meeting on the strategic dialogue with diplomatic representatives in Lebanon to facilitate resource mobilization, with a view to covering Lebanese Armed Forces capability gaps for tasks mandated under resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL facilitated donations from its troop-contributing countries, aimed at improving the accommodation and training facilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the area of operations, including a solar lighting system and power generators.

C. Disarming armed groups

33. Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah again confirmed Hizbullah's possession of rockets capable of striking any location in Israel in an interview

televised on 21 March. Nasrallah reiterated threats made during the previous reporting period that the cost of an Israeli attack on Lebanon would be substantially higher on Israel than on Lebanon and concluded that Hizbullah's arms therefore constituted a deterrent to potential aggression. On 20 April, the Israel Defense Forces Deputy Chief of Staff was reported to warn publicly that Israel's response to a strike by Hizbullah would lead to a full-scale war, creating large damage to the Lebanese infrastructure, to Lebanese houses and other civilian facilities. On 15 June, the Chief of the Israel Defense Forces Military Intelligence Directorate was reported to state that Israel did not have offensive intentions for war but was more than ever ready for one. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the Lebanese State continued to restrict the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory.

34. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security services made a number of arrests of Lebanese and Syrian terrorist suspects allegedly affiliated with ISIL and other violent extremist groups. Lebanese security forces also arrested a member of a ring recruiting minors to carry out attacks against the Lebanese Armed Forces and other targets. In a video released on 12 March, members of ISIL threatened Lebanese officials and Hizbullah and urged the Sunni community to revolt. On 11 May, military prosecutors charged 11 individuals with membership of ISIL, seven of whom were already in custody.

35. During the reporting period, there was no progress in the dismantling of the military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada. The existence of the bases continues to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to monitor and control effectively parts of the border.

36. The situation in the Palestinian refugee camps was generally quiet during the reporting period, with the exception of the Ein El Hilweh camp. On 28 March, a figure from the Fatah movement was shot dead by an Islamist militant, triggering a further round of violence in the camp. Later that day, the brother of the Islamist militant was killed by gunmen in an apparent revenge killing. On 1 April, one person was killed and several were wounded as further clashes broke out between armed groups in the camp. A senior Fatah official, Fathi Zeidan, was subsequently killed in an improvised explosive device attack on his vehicle, which injured four others, in Sayda, adjacent to the entrance of the Ein El Hilweh camp, on 12 April.

D. Arms embargo and border control

37. Representatives of the Government of Israel have consistently asserted that there are significant ongoing arms transfers to Hizbullah across the Lebanese-Syrian border, and that Hizbullah has now amassed an arsenal of more than 100,000 missiles and rockets, much of which Israel claims is located in civilian residential areas, such as in the letter dated 17 February 2016 addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/153). The United Nations takes these reports seriously, particularly given the statements by the Secretary-General of Hizbullah regarding the existence and capabilities of Hizbullah's strategic rocket arsenal, but is not in a position to verify them independently.

38. Hizbullah remained engaged in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Funerals for Hizbullah commanders and fighters killed in the Syrian Arab Republic

continued to be held in Lebanon throughout the reporting period. Other Lebanese individuals are also reported to have joined armed groups fighting in the Syrian conflict. On 13 May, Hizbullah announced the death of Mustapha Badreddine, the Hizbullah commander of military operations in the Syrian Arab Republic.

39. The situation along the Lebanese-Syrian border remained tense during the reporting period. Efforts to support the deployment of land border regiments at critical points along the border were ongoing. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained a vigilant presence around the town of Arsal and the neighbouring areas to prevent infiltration attempts by armed extremist groups, including ISIL and the Nusrah Front. On 10 March, the Lebanese Armed Forces launched a successful operation to seize territory held by ISIL on the outskirts of the border village of R’as Ba‘albak. The Lebanese Armed Forces reported that one of their soldiers and five members of ISIL had been killed in the course of the operation. On 24 March, a bomb targeting a Lebanese Armed Forces vehicle exploded in the area of Arsal, killing one soldier and injuring three others.

40. There was a decrease in the number of recorded incidents of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon, including nine incidents of shooting, nine incidents of shelling and one airstrike by a Syrian government aircraft on Lebanese territory. One fatality and nine casualties were reported as a result of those incidents.

41. There were continued reports of the cross-border movement of fighters and arms trafficking during the reporting period. On 28 February, Greek authorities stopped a boat destined for Lebanon illegally carrying firearms and explosives. Within Lebanon, security authorities arrested suspects for arms trafficking in four separate operations in Biqa‘ during the reporting period.

42. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to improve their capabilities pursuant to the capabilities development plan, despite the suspension of planned support from Saudi Arabia. On 25 March, I met with the Lebanese Armed Forces Command and representatives of the International Support Group for Lebanon at the Lebanese Armed Forces Headquarters, in Beirut. International partners continued to support the Lebanese Armed Forces on a bilateral basis to enhance their capability to secure the borders of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic and counter terrorist threats. The Executive Military Commission, bringing together the Lebanese Armed Forces and donors and co-chaired by the United Nations, met on 10 June to assess progress on support for the updated capabilities development plan, including the strategic dialogue. Ongoing commitments of support for the Lebanese Armed Forces were expressed, and three additional Member States formally joined the Executive Military Commission.

43. The continued implementation of the security plan for Tripoli contributed to a general calm in that area. The implementation of the security plan in Biqa‘ was ongoing, but a number of incidents occurred during the reporting period. In Brital, Ba‘albak and Hirmil, illegally held firearms were used by criminals against the security forces in personal disputes and in a domestic violence incident. Illegally held firearms were also used in incidents in Laylakah and Burj al-Barajinah in south Beirut, which caused a number of injuries. During the reporting period, shots fired in the air during celebratory or commemorative events using illegally held firearms were responsible for four deaths, including two children, and critically injuring three other children.

44. More than $671 million in international grants are available to Lebanon against the priorities outlined by the Government during the London Conference on Syria held in February. These funds include funding for 2016 under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. An additional $1 billion in grants is expected to be available to be disbursed in the course of 2016. In addition, Lebanon will be able to benefit from approximately $800 million in concessional financing that is expected for Lebanon and Jordan through the Concessional Financing Facility jointly developed by the United Nations, the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank.

45. As follow-up to the London Conference on Syria, the Government and international partners have developed a joint tracking mechanism to follow up on the statement of intent of Lebanon. This mechanism foresees the establishment of a high-level steering group, chaired by Mr. Salam and comprised of government and international partners, as the main platform for policy dialogue and monitoring of commitments made at and outcomes of the London Conference on Syria. Pending the establishment of this mechanism, the Government has held internal discussions on its commitment to review and reconsider current regulations governing access of Syrian refugees to the labour market. The Government has repeatedly stated that such access would be of a temporary nature and only applicable to agreed sectors, namely agriculture, construction and the environment.

46. During the first quarter of 2016, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the United Nations Children's Fund and other key stakeholders jointly began the development of phase II (2017-2021) of the plan entitled "Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon", in response to the protracted educational needs resulting from the Syrian conflict. For the 2015/2016 school year, national and international partners are supporting the enrolment and retention of a total of 197,000 Lebanese and 150,000 non-Lebanese children in all public schools. All public schools have opened their doors to non-Lebanese children.

47. The number of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic remained stable at approximately 40,000 individuals recorded with UNRWA in Lebanon, a slight decrease in the total number since the previous reporting period owing to the return of some refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic and to others reportedly leaving the country to try to reach Europe. Those Palestine refugees continued to face restrictions on renewing their legal status in Lebanon, which caused further humanitarian challenges. In March, UNRWA renewed the monthly cash assistance for housing, which is currently funded until October 2016. Further to this, UNRWA successfully transitioned from in-kind food donations to the provision of cash assistance, which provided for greater flexibility and addressed the risk of in-kind donations ending up on the informal market.

48. Together with its partners, the United Nations organized dedicated activities to strengthen the role of women in the democratic process and to raise awareness about gender issues. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon led the United Nations system in a series of eight events held across Lebanon, in collaboration with international and national partners, to support efforts by Lebanese women to engage in political life and be represented politically, including training for women candidates. The municipal elections saw only a slight increase in the number of women candidates, from 5.6 to 6.4 per cent, and the number of elected women rose from 4.6 to 5.2 per cent in comparison with 2010. The Office continued its efforts to strengthen women's participation and representation in preparation for the parliamentary elections.

49. The complex challenges currently affecting Lebanon underscore the importance of a robust multidimensional engagement by the United Nations system. The United Nations strategic framework for Lebanon (2017-2020), which is being finalized, integrates United Nations efforts towards peace and security objectives with support for governance, socioeconomic development and humanitarian efforts. The framework is intended to guide a system-wide integrated response, articulated on the basis of the "whole-of-Lebanon" approach, to help to address threats to stability, to prevent conflict and to improve socioeconomic prospects.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

50. Five manual mine clearance teams, one explosive ordnance disposal team and one mechanical mine clearance team continued to be validated and deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. UNIFIL refurbished 136 m^2 of land to provide access to Blue Line points during the reporting period. The Mine Action Service conducted 20 safety monitoring visits to refurbishment sites of the UNIFIL Military Engineering Unit, as well as 11 briefings and training sessions on weapons awareness. The Mine Action Service also contributed education materials on mine risk awareness to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre.

F. Delineation of borders

51. No progress was made towards the delineation or demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border during the reporting period, including in areas where it is uncertain or disputed, in spite of the call to that end made in Security Council resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). Extending the authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout all Lebanese territory and enabling the Lebanese security authorities to secure the borders to prevent the entry of arms or related materiel necessitate the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic as soon as practicable.

52. There was likewise no progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms. There has still been no reaction from either Israel or the Syrian Arab Republic to the provisional definition of that area contained in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641).

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

53. UNIFIL continuously reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures, including in the light of specific security threat warnings received, and closely coordinated them with the Lebanese authorities. In the Arqoub area (Sector East), strict security measures requiring armed security escort for official movements by all United Nations personnel remained in place. In the area of operations, commemorative shooting during events and gatherings, including funerals, posed a risk to UNIFIL personnel as well as the local population. During times of heightened tension in the Ein El Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp, UNIFIL adjusted its movements between the area of operations and Beirut in accordance with the prevailing security situation and advisories.

54. UNIFIL continued to monitor proceedings at the Lebanese Military Court against individuals suspected of planning or perpetrating serious attacks against UNIFIL. The next hearing related to a serious attack against UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent in 2007 is scheduled for 1 July. In the case of a serious attack perpetrated in 2008, in which one of the four previously sentenced perpetrators filed an appeal, a hearing at the Military Court of Appeal was held on 10 March, and the next hearing is scheduled for 20 September. In three cases of serious attacks perpetrated in 2011, the investigations are ongoing. In a case of terror intent opened in January 2014, a hearing at the Permanent Military Court was held on 13 June. The Court scheduled the next hearing for 7 December.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

55. As at 7 June, UNIFIL comprised 10,548 military personnel, including 384 women, from 40 troop-contributing countries, as well as 242 international and 578 national civilian staff, including 72 and 133 women, respectively. In addition, 54 military observers, including two women, of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) were part of UNIFIL.

V. Conduct and discipline

56. UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon continued to strengthen the existing preventative measures against sexual exploitation and abuse that had been put in place following a sexual exploitation and abuse risk assessment for Lebanon. Under the stewardship of the Deputy Special Coordinator, the United Nations country team on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse network has developed a standard operating procedure intended to standardize the response to the risk of such abuse and continuously assesses risk, in collaboration with local and international non-governmental organizations and local authorities. In this way, risk mitigation and preventive activities emphasize accountability and a victim-centred approach within the zero tolerance policy. In addition, a community-based complaints mechanism for Lebanon is under development on a pilot basis. Within UNIFIL, sexual exploitation and abuse focal points have been appointed and a Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Standing Task Force and a Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Immediate Response Team has been established to serve both missions, in line with the provisions of the reports of the Secretary-General A/69/779 and A/70/729.

VI. Observations

57. I am encouraged by the calm that prevailed in the UNIFIL area of operations and across the Blue Line during the reporting period, in large part the result of the strong commitment and efforts by both Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL, in close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has established a strategic environment in southern Lebanon following the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) that has proven its strength and viability over the years in a vastly changed regional

environment. The good offices provided by my Special Coordinator have been equally critical in that regard.

58. I welcome the continued commitment of the parties to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The violent and unstable regional context makes it ever more important for the parties to make tangible progress towards a permanent ceasefire, as envisaged in the resolution. In order to prevent future conflict, it is imperative that the parties seize this moment, 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), to revisit areas of potential progress. I call upon the parties to work constructively with my Special Coordinator and the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander to explore concrete solutions in pursuit of that goal. My Special Coordinator will continue to engage in preventive diplomacy with all those concerned and provide good offices to facilitate progress in this regard.

59. I welcome the continued reliance by the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces on the UNIFIL liaison and coordination arrangements as a key element in preventing and defusing tensions along the Blue Line. I am also encouraged by the ongoing cooperation of the parties with UNIFIL on the visible marking of the Blue Line and call upon both sides to renew their efforts to find points of agreement in relation to those stretches of the Blue Line where they deem marking to be contentious. Full respect for the Blue Line is a critical factor in maintaining calm and stability in the area and any deliberate violation of the Blue Line is unacceptable.

60. The absence of progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms area, in spite of the call made in resolution 1701 (2006), remains a source of concern. I reiterate my call upon the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel to submit their responses to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area that I provided in my report of 30 October 2007. I will continue to engage with the parties to that end.

61. The Israel Defense Forces continue to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). I once more remind Israel of its obligation to withdraw its armed forces from the area, in accordance with the resolution. I urge the Israeli authorities to take steps to that end and encourage them to make further use of the UNIFIL presence and liaison and coordination arrangements to facilitate a smooth and secure withdrawal from the area.

62. It remains of serious concern that Israel continued to violate Lebanese airspace on an almost daily basis, in complete disregard of the sovereignty of Lebanon and the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). I once again call upon the Government of Israel to cease all overflights of Lebanese territory and territorial waters.

63. I remain concerned about the continuing presence of unauthorized weapons in the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line, in breach of resolution 1701 (2006). The presence or firing of small arms in the area of operations, including during commemorative events, is not only in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) but also poses a risk to the population and UNIFIL personnel. I call upon the Government of Lebanon, which holds the primary responsibility, to take all actions necessary to ensure that there are no unauthorized armed personnel, assets or weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations.

64. It is the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, as the host Government, to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel. I welcome the overall

positive relationship between UNIFIL and the local population and the Mission's continued efforts to cultivate this relationship.

65. I condemn the car bomb attack of 12 June that targeted for the first time a financial institution in the banking sector of Lebanon, a sector that remains central to the country's stability and under the authority of the Central Bank Governor. I call upon the State authorities to continue to intensify their efforts to maintain security throughout the whole of Lebanon.

66. The long-term guarantee of peace between Lebanon and Israel requires proactive steps by both parties to resolve all outstanding issues. Rhetoric by either side threatening the use of force exacerbates tensions and escalates the probability of miscalculation that could lead to conflict. The possession of arms or threats of violence by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the State poses a serious threat to the fragile calm along the Blue Line. Hizbullah's claim that its sophisticated arsenal constitutes deterrence to potential Israeli aggression undermines resolution 1701 (2006). It is vital that, once a president is elected, the national dialogue reconvene to address outstanding elements of the resolution and the issue of the national defence strategy. It remains important that earlier decisions of the national dialogue are also implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

67. I reiterate the importance of close collaboration between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Further enhancing the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces for tasks mandated under the resolution in the UNIFIL area of operations on land and at sea is a strategic priority. Consistent with my messages to the International Support Group for Lebanon during my recent visit to Lebanon, I encourage Member States to increase assistance in the framework of the capabilities development plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces, including the strategic dialogue. I commend the Lebanese Armed Forces for their impartial role in addressing the many security challenges that Lebanon faces and I regret the loss of life of Lebanese soldiers in security operations. The unity and independence demonstrated by the Lebanese Armed Forces show that they deserve the confidence and support of the international community. I therefore welcome the ongoing bilateral support of other Member States for the Lebanese Armed Forces. The domestic security of Lebanon and the defence of its borders are the responsibility of the Lebanese Armed Forces, and it is essential that international partners continue to provide equipment and training, including for border protection and counter-terrorism, and to further develop its civil-military cooperation and human rights components.

68. All Lebanese parties must work together to preserve the political independence and sovereignty of Lebanon and shield it from the impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. I therefore condemn the participation of Lebanese citizens in the Syrian conflict in breach of the policy of disassociation adopted by the Government of Lebanon and of the principles of the Baabda Declaration of June 2012, which was agreed by all Lebanese political parties, and the importance of which has been reaffirmed by the Security Council. I call upon all Lebanese parties to cease any involvement in the Syrian conflict, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration, and to recommit to the Government's policy of disassociation.

69. I condemn the movement of fighters and war materiel across the Lebanese-Syrian border in breach of resolution 1701 (2006) and shelling, shooting and aerial incursions into Lebanese border areas from the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate that the lack of a delineated, demarcated Lebanese-Syrian border is no justification for violations of Lebanese sovereignty by any party. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and groups fighting in Qalamun to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

70. I continue to be concerned by the risk of radicalization among the Lebanese population as a result of regional and domestic dynamics. Lebanon must be safeguarded against this. I urge all national and international stakeholders to work with the United Nations in the coming months to formulate a comprehensive approach to prevent violent extremism in Lebanon in order to protect the country's unique multi-confessional nature.

71. The dangerous potential impact of radicalization is magnified considerably by the proliferation of arms outside the control of the Lebanese State. Illegally held firearms pose a serious threat to the security of the citizens of Lebanon and undermine the rule of law. I call upon Member States to uphold their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006) to prevent the sale or supply of unauthorized arms or related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon. I also call upon the Lebanese authorities to enforce the relevant regulations that prohibit the practice of unauthorized gunfire.

72. I commend Mr. Salam's continued leadership and efforts to enable the Government to function effectively. The announcements of cabinet resignations at a time when Lebanon faces growing challenges demand unity in Government. Such steps contribute to the continuing erosion of the political institutions of the Lebanese State. I am deeply concerned about the inability of the Government to take decisions in the interest of the country and call upon the political leadership in Lebanon to stand together in the national interest despite their political differences. Party leaders need to work with Mr. Salam to ensure that the Government may effectively respond to the people's needs. Recalling the Security Council press statement of 24 May (SC/12371), I reiterate my deep concern over the two-year vacancy in the presidency, which has led to blockages in the Council of Ministers and rendered the parliament incapable of passing legislation. The resulting political paralysis seriously impairs the ability of Lebanon to address the political, social, economic, humanitarian and security challenges facing the country and risks undermining the confidence of Lebanese citizens and the international community in the country's stability. All parties have a responsibility to facilitate the functioning of State institutions and the delivery of public services. As consistently called for by the Security Council, I urge all political leaders to exercise flexibility in order to reach consensus to elect a president and end the political and institutional crisis in Lebanon. This is urgent. The leaders of Lebanon have a responsibility towards their country and are directly accountable to their constituents and to future generations for their actions. In this regard, I call upon those who have boycotted parliamentary sessions to fulfil their constitutional duty to participate in the election of a president without delay.

73. I commend the Government of Lebanon for the timely and orderly conduct of the municipal elections. This has demonstrated the Government's capacity and the people's desire to uphold the democratic process. I urge the Lebanese authorities to

move ahead within the calender for the next legislative elections, in accordance with the Constitution. I encourage strengthened women's participation and effective representation in the elections with the highest turnout possible. The election of a president, a functioning and united Government and timely parliamentary elections are critical for the stability of Lebanon and its capacity to withstand regional challenges.

74. The proceedings of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon continue to reflect the international community's commitment to combat impunity. I note the sentencing of Michel Samahah and encourage the Lebanese judicial and security authorities to continue their efforts to combat impunity.

75. I thank the Member States participating in the International Support Group for Lebanon and welcome the continued country-level engagement of the Group in Beirut, led by my Special Coordinator. The Group has met to coordinate efforts and messaging on the peace and security, stabilization, and humanitarian and development issues that Lebanon faces. My Special Coordinator for Lebanon will continue in the context of her good offices role to conduct intensified contacts with the partners of Lebanon and engage with key stakeholders with the aim of helping Lebanon towards a solution to the presidential vacancy. I urge the Group to continue its work in coordination with the Special Coordinator to seek opportunities to help to address rising challenges to the stability and security of Lebanon. Regional partners, including Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, also have an interest in preventing the spillover of regional crises into Lebanon. The international community needs to support collectively the political and economic stability of Lebanon, including through the continued provision of assistance.

76. I welcome the generous and significant levels of international assistance that have been pledged for Lebanon since the London Conference on Syria in February. I note the progress achieved in the establishment of a mechanism to support the implementation of the statement of intent of Lebanon and call upon the Government of Lebanon and international partners to maintain momentum in the implementation of the commitments made during the London Conference to ensure a sustainable and adequate response to the protracted impact of the Syrian conflict on Lebanese communities and institutions. I further commend the partnership between the World Bank, the United Nations and the Islamic Development Bank in the development of the Concessional Financing Facility for Lebanon, which I urge Member States to support.

77. As I stated publicly during my visit to Lebanon, the position of the United Nations is that Syrian refugees should return to the Syrian Arab Republic when conditions are conducive, or that they should be resettled in a third country. I reiterate that the preferred solution is their return to their country, when conditions allow, at which time the United Nations will spare no effort to mobilize support for returnees. In the meantime, I urge the Government to continue to review, in line with its commitments made at the London Conference, the current regulatory framework governing access of Syrian refugees to the labour market, and welcome the various initiatives currently being developed under its aegis to create temporary employment opportunities for Syrian refugees pending their eventual return, and durable employment opportunities for vulnerable Lebanese, in particular the 30 per cent of Lebanese citizens who live below the poverty line.

78. I welcome the continued commitment of the Palestinian leadership to disassociate the Palestinian camps in Lebanon from the violence in the region. The need to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, without prejudice to the resolution of the refugee question in the context of a comprehensive and just peace settlement, is ever more urgent. The recent protests indicate the increased reliance of the Palestine refugees on UNRWA services and show that a more sustainably funded UNRWA leads to more stability in Lebanon and the region. I encourage donors to be forthcoming in their support for UNRWA to avert a similar funding crisis in 2016 and enable the Agency to carry out its mandate to assist Palestine refugees effectively.

79. I am pleased to note the renewed effort by Mr. Salam to make progress on resolving the issue of the delineation of the exclusive economic zones between Lebanon and Israel, as expressed in a letter he addressed to me on 24 March. Establishing a mutually profitable way to exploit offshore oil and gas resources would constitute an important confidence-building measure between Lebanon and Israel. As stated in my response to Mr. Salam, I intend to intensify my good offices through my Special Coordinator to explore with all parties concerned the conditions for moving forward on this issue and how the United Nations can best support such efforts.

80. The stability of Lebanon is a "regional public good". Almost 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), relative calm prevails along the Blue Line. This is a positive development. But relative calm should not be mistaken for durable stability. Many of the root causes of the conflict are largely unaddressed. The long-term preventive potential of the resolution requires us, actively and collectively, to seek to move forward with its implementation. Addressing the outstanding objectives of resolution 1701 (2006) can serve as an important confidence-building measure for the region, and I appeal to the Security Council and to bilateral partners and donors to redouble efforts to encourage both Lebanon and Israel to progress on the implementation of the resolution. Progress on the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions will be central to peace and security in Lebanon, to end conflict in the region and to a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

81. I wish to extend my continued appreciation to all countries contributing troops and equipment to UNIFIL and Observer Group Lebanon of UNTSO. I thank my Special Coordinator, Sigrid Kaag, and the staff of her office for their efforts; as well as the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL. I pay tribute to the outgoing UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Luciano Portolano, who has provided excellent service and leadership for the past two years.

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Report of the Secretary-General concerning the credentials of the alternate representative of Spain on the Security Council

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received a letter dated 8 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations stating that Ms. Francisca María Pedros Carretero has been appointed alternate representative of Spain on the Security Council.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, that letter constitutes adequate provisional credentials.

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